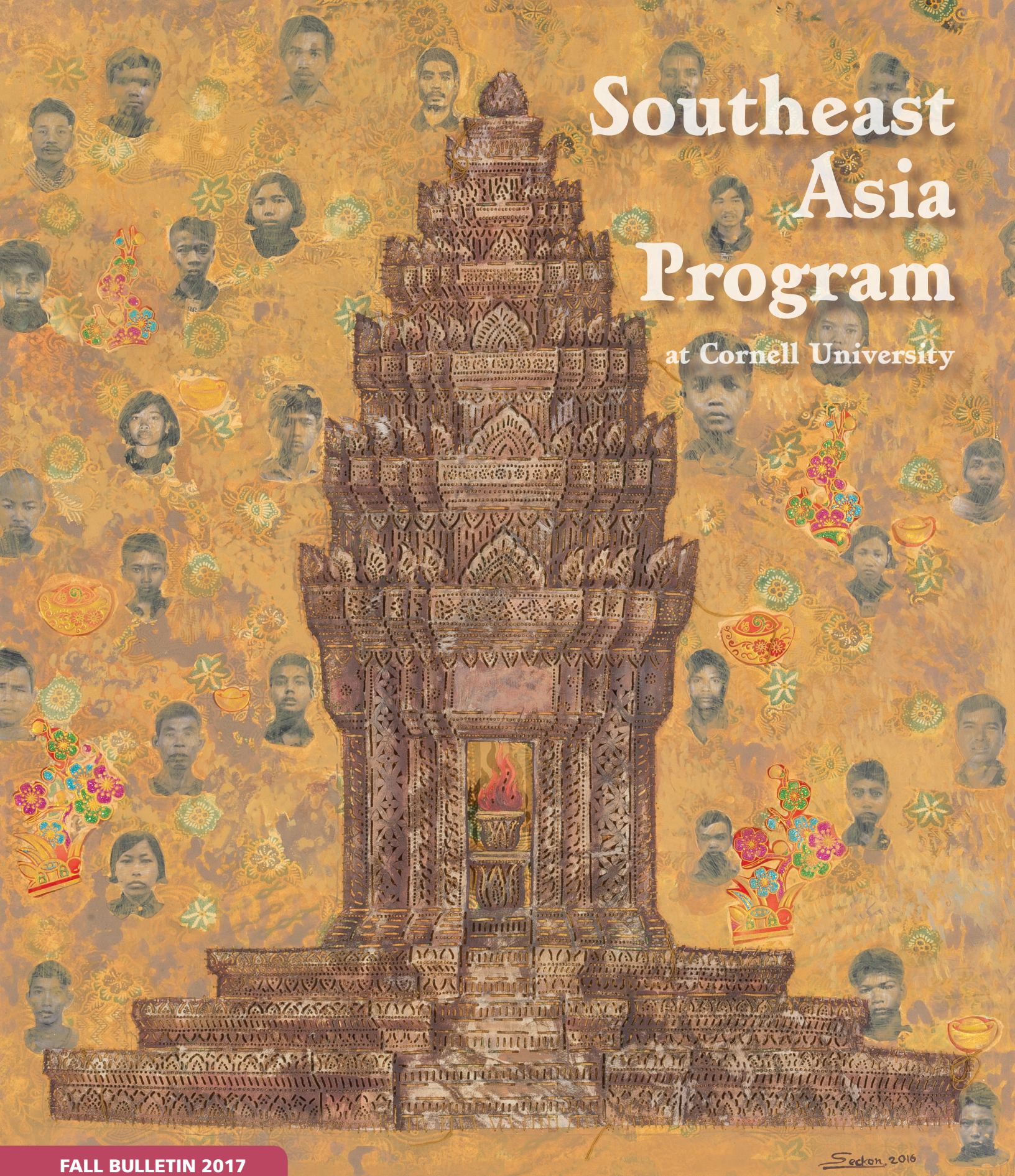


Southeast Asia Program

at Cornell University



FALL BULLETIN 2017

Section 2016



Cornell University

ABOUT THE COVER

Leang Seckon

Cambodian, born ca. 1970

*Independence Monument
and S21 Prisoners, 2016*

Mixed media and collage
on batik cloth

100 x 110 cm

Acquired through the George
and Mary Rockwell Fund

Independence Monument, a prominent site in Phnom Penh, was built in an Angkor-revival style to mark Cambodia's 1953 independence from France. In Leang's image, the monument is made of leather with finely cut out patterns like a shadow puppet prop. The ceremonial flame inside and floral motifs scattered around the monument refer to the annual commemoration of Independence Day, while the images of victims of the Khmer Rouge genocide add another layer to the memorial's meaning. The artist did not visit Tuol Sleng, site of the notorious S21 prison and now a museum, until 2009. After having a visceral and traumatic reaction upon seeing it for the first time, Leang started incorporating references to S21 in his works. About this piece, he said he was trying to show "that the Independence Monument is a symbol of liberty and relief, and independence means that we do what we want to for our mind and our thought. It is sad that in this same city, where independence is/was received, people were coerced and killed. Tuol Sleng is a torture prison, and if we compare the two together it is like heaven and hell. . . . Why after receiving independence did we fall into a place even worse than we were before."

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Letter from the Director

As I write this letter I am on the brink of taking over as director of SEAP. It is an enormous honor to take up this mantle, coming on the heels of Kaja McGowan's very successful directorship and joining the ranks of the outstanding scholars who have directed the program over the decades. When I joined the program as an assistant professor in 1992, Randy Barker was director. Randy, now emeritus, has just been awarded the 2017 Clifton Wharton Jr. Emerging Markets Award from the Cornell International Institute for Food, Agriculture, and Development.

When I mention to colleagues elsewhere on campus, or at other institutions, that I am taking over as director of an academic program for which all the faculty do everything on a volunteer basis, they look at me as though I am crazy. How does such a program function? What they don't know is that this is, in fact, the source of commitment and profound collegiality among the SEAP faculty. Everyone is involved because they have an interest in and commitment to developing and promoting a better understanding of Southeast Asia; and for each of us the interplay between disciplinary, inter-disciplinary, and area studies enriches our teaching and scholarly endeavors. It is in order to foster this collegial exchange that I am looking forward to serving as director for a two-year term.

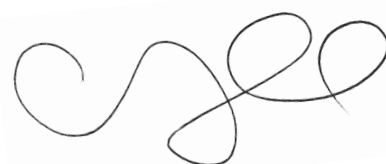
This is a moment of both continuity and change for the program. Faculty directors come and go, and what makes this all possible is our outstanding staff in administration, outreach, and publications. We bid farewell this summer to our administrative assistant Betty Nguyen, who is moving to the West Coast and has brought so much energy and pizzazz to our front office. At the same time we are glad to welcome on board James Nagy.

During her three-year term, Kaja has brought enormous creativity and capacious and contagious intellectual energy to the program. This is evident in numerous ways, perhaps most strikingly through the very successful conference and the linked exhibits and *wayang* performance she organized this past April: Still in the Game: The State of Indonesian Art History in the 21st Century. Timed to recognize Cornell Modern Indonesia Project (CMIP) founding member Claire Holt and mark the fiftieth anniversary of Holt's, *Art in Indonesia: Continuities and Change*, published by Cornell University Press, Kaja brought together nineteen internationally recognized scholars from Indonesia, Australia, Europe, and the United States to share research, which will be published as an edited volume by SEAP Publications in the new CMIP series. On the teaching side, Kaja also engaged actively in a number of new initiatives, developing a new course about Education in Myanmar and leading the Cornell in Cambodia Program with a new course, Performing Angkor: Dance, Silk, and Stone, which links architecture, performing arts, and textiles.

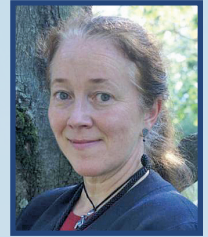
As Kaja finishes her term, she has already put in place an exciting series of workshops and conferences for the next couple of years, including the next CMIP conference and a series of four collaborative cross-Asia conferences supported by Einaudi Center internationalization funds. On the immediate horizon this fall is the first of the cross-Asia conferences on cinema: Haunted: Temporalities of History and (Moving) Image in Asia. We will also start off the fall semester hosting a major language pedagogy conference, Southeast Asian Language Teaching: New Directions, planned in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin and the Centers for Southeast Asian Studies at University of California-Berkeley and at University of California, Los Angeles, with support from the US Department of Education Title VI Program and the Henry Luce Foundation. This conference brings together Southeast Asia language instructors from across the United States and abroad to share pedagogical innovations, develop collaborative projects, and address the critical importance of these least commonly taught of the less commonly taught languages.

Kaja's vibrant directorship is a hard act to follow, but I will do my best.

—Abby Cohn, professor, linguistics, director, Southeast Asia Program



from mountain to sea



by Kaja McGowan,
professor of history of art

Cornell Modern Indonesia Project's Third Conference Commemorates the 50th Anniversary of Claire Holt's *Art in Indonesia: Continuities and Change*

The ability to bring characters to life...

...and distant realms into close proximity is the mark of a great shadow master. Sumarsam's performance of "Dewaruci/Bimasuci" ("Bima Purified") on Sunday, April 23, 2017, in the Johnson Museum of Art, was no exception. The puppeteer and Wesleyan University professor of music was accompanied by the Cornell Gamelan Ensemble, under the direction of Christopher Miller, with additional guest performers Pak Muryanto, Mbak Heni Savitri, and Jan Mrázek (National University of Singapore). The *wayang* performance marked the conclusion of the third Cornell Modern Indonesia Project (CMIP) conference, 'Still in the Game': The State of Indonesian Art History in the 21st Century, held April 21–23, 2017. The conference brought together nineteen leading scholars and artists from around the world, each presenting on panels reflecting closely the organization of chapters in Claire Holt's *Art in Indonesia: Continuities and Change* (1967), now celebrating the fiftieth anni-

versary of its publication with Cornell University Press.¹

Using puppets and their shadows to tell the story of Bima and Dewaruci, Sumarsam enticed his spellbound audience on a journey from mountain to sea in search of nothing less than "true knowledge," elusively contained in the water of life—a perfect metaphor for the conference proceedings as a whole. It is on the bottom of the ocean where Bima finally encounters a diminutive being, Dewaruci, who in appearance is a miniature version of his own self. Upon the deity's invitation, Bima, confounded but willing, enters into Dewaruci through his ear and thus, mystically interpreted, fuses with his own newly discovered "spiritual self." This transformative moment in the story is exquisitely conveyed through the performative expertise of the puppeteer, where the tiny Dewaruci, perched in the aperture of the *kayon* puppet [at this juncture in the story, standing in as the entirety of the sea] encounters his

enlarged shadow as Bima in that mystical moment of fusion. This *wayang* story held a very special place in Claire Holt's heart, perhaps because she felt such empathy with the hidden power for growth in all things.²

Mainstream art history has tended to view *wayang* puppets as devoid of their shadow-life. By placing them in a largely inanimate state, either behind glass or photographed on a blank field, their inherent performative powers, combined with their ability to serve as extensions of the shadow puppeteer's body, have largely been eclipsed. The conference title, *Still in the Game*, argues for a continued struggle against this kind of erasure. By extension, such a title suggests that Southeast Asian art history has been somewhat marginalized by the established canon of art history and its formation, and yet it is the relatively belated moment of its incorporation into that canon that makes the state of the field the richly speculative and interdisciplinary one



Sumarsam, Winslow-Kaplan Professor of Music from Wesleyan University, and renowned *dalang* manipulates the puppet and their shadows to tell the story and to create the appropriate atmosphere. In this case, Bima descends from the mountains into the sea where he is invited to enter into the ear of the diminutive Dewa Ruci. Sumarsam is accompanied by the Cornell Gamelan Ensemble under the direction of Christopher J. Miller.

Inset: Some of the conference participants gather in the museum lobby after the wayang performance.

that it continues to be today. As one of the conference presenters, Jan Mrázek, has remarked elsewhere, “Holt’s *Art in Indonesia* is exceptional in its presentation of *wayang*,” revealing by the unpacking of each of her chapters how “single-mindedly limited the more general surveys of Southeast Asian art are in scope and vision.”³

In place of a keynote address the first panel opened the conference festivities at the George Mc.T Kahin Center for Southeast Asian Studies on Friday, April 21, by revisiting Holt’s final chapter of *Art in Indonesia*, “The Great Debate.” Astri Wright (University of Victoria), Anissa Rahadiningtyas (PhD candidate, history of art, Cornell University), and Adrian Vickers (University of Sydney) conducted the discussion. Like Sumarsam’s collapsing of Bima into Dewaruci

through the manipulation of shadows, Holt’s collapsing of time and space through works of art serves as a powerful structural device in *Art in Indonesia*. Embodying echoes of ancient resonances in modern and contemporary art is key to Holt’s oeuvre, and these scholars expanded the parameters of her classic text, asking new questions, especially with regard to the largely overlooked presence of Islam and the Islamicate visual traditions in the writings about modern art in the 1950s.

Saturday’s three panels unfolded chronologically: “Exploring Some Pre-historic Roots” brought ancient themes into view with papers presented by John Miksic (National University of Singapore); Agus Aris Manundar (Universitas Indonesia), who was unable to attend but whose paper was graciously

presented by his colleague, Miksic; and Nina Capistrano-Baker (Ayala Foundation). Exploring material continuities in bronze, gold, and clay, this panel set the stage for further expanding Holt’s geographical framework, while seeking continuities in how the echoes of pre-history and more ancient art continue to resonate in the “living traditions” of the visual and the performing arts, so integral to the panels that ensued.

“The Impact of Indian Influences and Emergence of New Styles” included presentations by Stanley J. O’Connor (Cornell University), Cecelia Levin (Harvard University), and Natasha Reichle (Asian Art Museum, San Francisco), with a paper, not presented but to be included in the published volume, by John Guy (Metropolitan Museum of Art). The third panel, “Dance and Dance

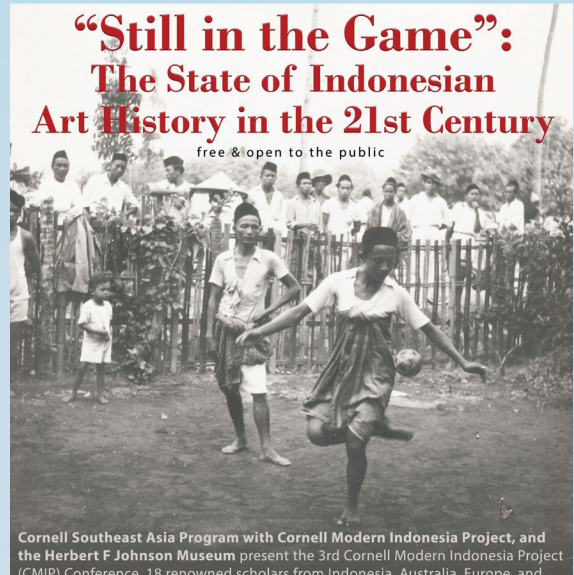
Drama,” introduced new questions, further revising Holt’s narrative with presentations by Felicia Hughes-Freeland (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London), Laurie Margot Ross (independent curator and educator), and Kaja McGowan (Cornell University).

Not even a campuswide power outage could dim the spirits of the presenters scheduled for Sunday morning’s two panels at the Johnson Museum. “The Wayang World” included presentations by Matthew Isaac Cohen (University of London), Jan Mrázek (National University of Singapore), and Sumarsam (Wesleyan University). The final panel, “Photography and New Media,” significantly diverged from Holt’s text, introducing the increasingly dynamic role played by video, film, and photography—not just as



Left: Curator of Asian Art, Ellen Avril, standing with former SEAP Director, Kaja McGowan, celebrating yet another remarkable collaboration between the Southeast Asia Program, the Johnson Museum of Art, and the Department of Music.

Right: Publicity poster for the conference featuring “Raga player at Macassar,” photo by Claire Holt. First published in Holt’s *Dance Quest in Celebes*, *Les Archives Internationales de la Danse*, 6 Rue Vital, Paris, France, 1938.



Indonesian Puppet and Mask Collection at the Johnson Museum

by Elizabeth Emrich, curatorial assistant for Asian art

The Johnson Museum of Art is home to a rich collection of Indonesian shadow puppets (*wayang kulit*), rod puppets (*wayang golek*), and dance masks (from the *wayang topeng*), given by the late Aaron L. Binenkorb Professor of Government Benedict Anderson (1936–2015). A selection of these, curated by Laurie Margot Ross, former visiting fellow at the Kahin Center, is currently installed on the museum’s fifth floor until spring 2018 where some items will rotate out to feature puppets from other gifts to the museum.

Wayang kulit on view include characters from the *Mahabharata*: depictions of Arjuna and his powerful older brother, Bima, of the Pandawa brothers, along with their opponent Cakil, and Semar, the wise and humorous clown. Across all *wayang* forms the antics of the *panakawan*, or clown figures, both enliven and explicate the main characters’ stories, as well as provide social commentary and critique to be enjoyed by the audience.

Topeng on display feature masks from the *Panji lakon* (cycle of stories) and include three different versions of the red-faced, long-nosed character, Klono, an enemy king who tries to steal Candra Kirana away from Prince Panji. Included as well are several *panakawan* masks and versions of the Panji mask, some of which can be used by dancers to play Arjuna, since Panji is sometimes considered to be his reincarnation.

The group of *wayang golek* puppets represent characters from the tales of Amir Hamzah, Arab prince and uncle of the Prophet Muhammad, along with Candra Kirana from the *Panji lakon*, and two puppets of officials that wear a striking combination of traditional batik skirt and a uniform jacket, clearly referencing Dutch official clothing from the colonial period. Some of the *wayang golek* in Benedict Anderson’s collection were formerly owned by Claire Holt, author of the seminal text *Art in Indonesia: Continuities and Change* and mentor to Anderson.

Far from a static tradition, *wayang* performances have consistently reflected and commented upon their contemporary historical and political moments, whether under colonial rule or during the political upheaval of the mid-twentieth century. Benedict Anderson’s careful collection of these objects speaks to his devotion to this tradition, to Javanese culture, and to Indonesia and its history.

Top: Shadow puppet representing Panji; unidentified artist; Indonesia; Java buffalo leather, buffalo horn, pigments; 24 3/4 x 1 1/8 in.; collection of the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art; Cornell University; gift of Professor Benedict R. O’G. Anderson.

Bottom: Panji mask; unidentified artist; Indonesian painted wood; 6 7/8 x 5 11/16 x 3 15/16 in.; collection of the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art; Cornell University; gift of Professor Benedict R. O’G. Anderson.



ethnographic tools, but as art objects in their own right—with presentations by Arahmaiani (independent artist), Alia Swastika (curator and director, Ark Gallerie, Yogyakarta, Indonesia), and Brian Arnold (photographer, curator, and visiting research fellow, Cornell University). Closing remarks were graciously presented by Ismunandar, head of the education and culture section of the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Washington, DC. He concluded that Holt would have been proud to preside over a conference (and accompanying volume) like this in which so many Indonesians were included.

Indeed, without the generous support from the Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies, the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, and the Cornell departments of Music and History of Art and Archaeology, we would not have been able to host such an international engagement of scholars. A special thank you must be extended to Ellen Avril, curator of Asian Art at the Johnson Museum, who has been on board with the planning of this conference from its inception, helping to make possible the dream of hosting Indonesian contemporary performance artist Arahmaiani as artist in residence for the entire week. Ellen Avril has also been instrumental in bringing and making possible two exhibitions this year at the

Johnson: curator Brian Arnold's traveling show *Identity Crisis: Reflections on Public and Private Life in Contemporary Javanese Photography*; and Laurie Margot Ross's *Valentine*, dedicated to the memory of the late Benedict Anderson, the Aaron Binenkorb Professor of Government, whose Javanese masks, wayang kulit and golek puppets (many once in the collection of Claire Holt and then passed on to her illustrious student) have now made their home in the Johnson's permanent collection.

Somewhere between the solid white walls of Macassar's old Fort Rotterdam and the bustling trade of her coastal port, Claire Holt describes the first dance steps witnessed on what is to be her ten-day whirlwind tour from mountain to sea, captured in *Dance Quest in Celebes* (1939).⁴ Published almost thirty years before *Art in Indonesia*, her consummate gift for situating her readers physically in a landscape is already in evidence. With her embodied ability as a writer, Holt describes a game of *raga* (more commonly known as *sepak takraw*). She writes, "having kicked up the ball with his instep to considerable height, he made a few elastic dance steps, holding out his half-rounded arms at the sides and turning the hands from the wrist, inwards and out again." Captured poignantly in Holt's photograph is the player's consummate

skill—being able to kick a rattan ball from behind without actually being able to see it! What clearly draws Holt to this pivotal moment is its balanced grace, the player's embodied sense of the arc of the rattan ball as it ascends and descends. This popular coastal game provides Holt with the necessary hook to draw in her readers to the specifics of the dances of Celebes.

She does something similar in *Art in Indonesia* by describing the circular arc created by a Simalungan Batak datu, drawing magic signs for a ceremony at Pematang Raya. Like Sumarsam's encapsulation of Bima in the ear of Dewaruci, Holt pulls us into a circular aperture of white rice paste, where the continuities and change of land, sea, and sky cohere. Like a shadow master manipulating her puppets, Holt brings together elemental connections from the flight of Sumatran Batak hornbill masks and disembodied Javanese batik wings to a Balinese painting, "Conversation of Fish," by Ida Bagus Nyoman Rai, playing visually with a similar conversation engaging fish carved in a river of stone more than nine centuries before at her beloved Candi Prambanan in Central Java. All things "still in the game," and in the words prepared in 1970 for Holt's memorial service overlooking Cayuga Lake by the late Benedict Anderson: "all old things, but things which stay through change." ☞



Left: One of Indonesia's most seminal and respected contemporary artists, Arahmaiani, presents an Artist's Talk for the new seminar, ARTH 4857 "Biodiversity in Art" co-taught by Professors Annetta Alexandridis and Kaja McGowan at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum on April 26, 2017.

Right: The event was open to the public, and included a collaborative hands-on component, where students and faculty were encouraged to design and make mandala out of brightly colored beans.

(Photos by David O. Brown, Johnson Museum)

¹ Claire Holt, *Art in Indonesia: Continuities and Change* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967).

² Holt, *Art in Indonesia*, 146–47.

³ Jan Mrázek and Morgan Pitelka, eds., *What's the Use of Art? Asian Visual and Material Culture in Context* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2008), 292.

⁴ Claire Holt, *Dance Quest in Celebes* (Paris: Les Archives Internationales de la Danse, 1939).

Stitching Together One Day in the Life of Cornell in Cambodia's Performing Angkor dance, silk, & stone



The initial goal for Performing Angkor: Dance, Silk, and Stone (ARTH 3856-001), a two-week Cornell in

Cambodia (CIC) course offered for the first time during winter session 2016–17, was to encourage students, in an embodied way, to explore how the creative and political fastening of the lived world to a spiritual place like Angkor has a long and richly embedded history.



by Kaja McGowan,
professor of history of art

AS A RESULT of Cornell's renewed efforts to internationalize undergraduate education and provide meaningful international experiences for students, I am grateful to my colleague, Professor Andrew Mertha in the Department of Government, who first developed such a course for CIC in partnership with the Center for Khmer Studies (CKS) at Wat Damnak in Siem Reap, whose infrastructure is readily adaptable for virtually any course with Cambodia content taught by SEAP faculty. Among the many assignments in ARTH 3856 students visited sacred sites and weaving workshops; observed dance classes and performances; and visited Cambodia's National Museum, the Royal Palace, and the Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocidal Crimes (S-21). The course addresses in a variety of ways the densely textured interplay between memory and place.

In this context Angkor becomes a site for what anthropologist Tim Ingold advocates as a way of "thinking through making," in which sentient practitioners and active materials such as dancing bodies, carved stone, woven and stitched threads continually answer to, or correspond with, one another in the generation and regeneration of forms. I had imagined initially that my role as professor would be to bring students to these remarkable places and lecture alone *in situ*. In fact, I was pleasantly surprised to find that for each excursion the Center for Khmer Studies matched us up with

local expertise. For our trips to Angkor Thom, Kbal Spean, and Banteay Srei, we had the great pleasure of learning firsthand from the Cambodian deputy director of the Department of Conservation of the Monuments Outside Angkor Park and an Apsara National Authority Dr. Ea Darith, archaeologist, professor, and photographer, who posed with us on the steps of the CKS library. During the second week in Phnom Penh choreographers, curators, and museum conservationists joined the course as it unfolded. The multiple perspectives were invaluable and helped students realize the initial goal for the course in profound ways that we could not have anticipated at the outset.

One Wednesday afternoon, January 11, 2017, the ten Cornell undergraduate students, led by me, Cornell PhD candidate and teaching assistant Alexandra Dalferro, and Center for Khmer Studies' facilitator Mr. Pheng, convened at the Java Café in Phnom Penh for a meeting with Cambodian curator, Yean Reaksmeay. A two-minute walk from the Independence Monument, with views over Sihanouk Boulevard Park, Java Café first opened in 2000 to visitors from around the world. Earlier that morning the students had visited the disturbing spectacle of Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocidal Crimes. Later that evening they were scheduled to be introduced to Sisaphan Tha Prum, former dancer from the Royal University of Fine Arts, by Cornell senior instructor of Khmer, Hannah Phan. Three sequential experi-

ences stitched together to constitute one day in the life of Performing Angkor: Dance, Silk, and Stone.

Sitting together with the charismatic Reaksmeay, the students discussed his recent exhibition, curated at the Java Café and Gallery overlooking Independence Monument, entitled *Influence: The New Ages* (October 31–November 19, 2016), highlighting the work of contemporary Cambodian artist Leang Seckon. Key to the exhibition is Seckon's mixed media on canvas, *Independence Monument and S21 Prisoners* (2016), where Seckon has selected and moderated thirty mugshots of youthful faces from among the countless S21 victims. As if quilted together in a field of flowers, each disembodied face searches soulfully beyond the viewer from a transcendent niche surrounding an image of the Independence Monument, its inner flame lit to commemorate the dead. As the students sat in the Java Café, they had only to look over the veranda to catch a glimpse of the actual stone memorial, raked by the harsh sunlight of the noon hour.

Modeled on the central tower of Angkor Wat, Independence Monument was built in 1958 to commemorate the country's independence from France in 1953. It also serves as a memorial to Cambodia's war dead. Wreathes are laid there on national holidays, when an internal flame entices passersby to remember. Reaksmeay had the students read from his interview with Leang Seckon regarding the meaning of "influence" as it pertains to the relationship between the problematic Tuol Sleng—prison-as-museum—where the students

Left: Cornell in Cambodia 2017 students, faculty, and Center for Khmer Studies (CKS) staff on the front steps of the library for CKS. (Photo by Dr. Ea Darith)

had been earlier that morning, and the Independence Monument, standing nearby in the sun. Reading directly from Reaksmey's perceptive interview with Leang Seckon, students are able to feel the force of the artist's own words in conversation with a renowned curator and fellow Cambodian:

I've never been to Tuol Sleng until 2009, before my big show in London. I decided to visit Tuol Sleng because my work, Heavy Skirt, has some connection to it, and I couldn't ignore it anymore. It's also a reminder of my past and bitter experiences with the Pol Pot regime—I was once held at gunpoint by a Pol Pot [soldier], and I was so frightened. The first time that I visited Tuol Sleng was with my former colleague and friend, Fleur Bourgeois. I fainted and threw up; I was uncomfortable being there, and I returned home after a while. It is OK now to return to Tuol Sleng. Also, I've been using a lot of materials of Tuol Sleng in my work since then, and in my recent works. And, here [Independence Monument and S21 prisoners], what I am trying to

depict and show is that independence as a language, or the Independence Monument, is a symbol of liberty and relief, and the independence means that we do what we want to for our mind and our thought. It is sad that in this same city [Phnom Penh], where independence is/was received, people were coerced and killed. Tuol Sleng is a torture prison, and if we compare the two [independence and prison] together it is like heaven and hell. And these two . . . ironically [happened] within one place. If the killing fields happened first and independence occurred later it would be all right, but why after receiving independence did we fall into a place even worse than we were before receiving independence? This is a good question, and I am, of course, talking about life during the French colonial era.¹

The concept of influence, as a subtle language of stitched sympathies, also manifests itself performatively in *The Buried Jewelry*, from Seckon's 2016 collage series. A complex interplay coheres that cannot be fully unpacked here; found materials collected by the artist

during his travels are sewn together to trigger perhaps personal reconciliations of some kind. To the right of the composition, aligned along the left side of a flaming blue and gold column, the students recognize immediately the strangely disembodied face of the Statue of Liberty, who casts her eyes upward to behold virtually the same elaborate naga lintel that crowns the Cornell students in the photograph earlier on the steps at CKS in Wat Damnak. Here, in Seckon's grasp, the lintel is cropped into a crown foisted from Angkorian climes onto the head of Lady Liberty.

Given to the United States in 1886 by the French, who were concomitantly colonizing Cambodia, the Statue of Liberty was intended to celebrate the centennial birthday of the Declaration of Independence from the bonds of slavery and the victory of the Union in the Civil War. Stitched beneath this and woven into Angkor's stones and America's woven stripes is a quote from a colorful re-creation by Cambodia's Royal Ballet Director, Proeung Chhieng, in 2013. Here, classically trained Khmer dancers are posed in New York City's Times Square to remember, through the powerful articulation of gesture (*kbach*), a similar morning in 1971, when eighteen Khmer dancers were likewise photographed in dance positions, evoking the then famous dance of the heavenly goddesses (*apsara*), inspired from Angkorian reliefs. One moment—pre-Pol Pot and post-Pol Pot—stitched together across generations under the iconic Coca Cola sign, would seem to collapse both contemporary and post-colonial sensibilities, potentially eclipsing the Killing Fields.

Everywhere in Seckon's collages references to Khmer traditional ornament (*kbach*) provide the visual building blocks—stone stairs, stars, and stripes—that reveal subtle, stitched commentaries about the ambiguities of independence. Later in the evening students were able to reflect on these ornamental and gestural affinities (all subsumed in the Khmer language under the same word *kbach*) while guided by the graceful Sisaphan Tha Prum, former dancer from the Royal University of

Experiencing firsthand the sacred waters of Kbal Spean, Professor McGowan stands in the center with students Piragash Swargaloganathan (left) and Tenzin Wangmo (right).



Fine Arts. Through much laughter and fun, students experienced the pleasure of being wrapped in colorful Khmer silk costumes while being encouraged to replicate some of the same classical gestures they had witnessed earlier in the day. Perhaps some of those youthful, disembodied faces from Tuol Sleng, rendered transcendent in Seckon's carefully stitched compositions, found some reconciliation in the liberated arms and legs of students in motion? "Independence as a language," according to Leang Seckon, means that "we do what we want to for our own mind and thought." Certainly the students' final projects reflected many of these sympathetic complexities, all comparatively configured through the lens of enslavement and freedom, concepts never again to be taken for granted. ☞



Professor Andrew Mertha, Director of the Center for Khmer Studies (CKS), greets the Cornell in Cambodia (CIC) students and CKS staff on the steps of the library at Wat Damnak. In the background, Professor Kaja McGowan (left) speaks with invaluable and amazing member of the CKS staff, Sreyppich (right), whose job it was to organize everything so that the CIC winter session would run smoothly and effectively. (Photo by Dr. Ea Darith)

“testimonies”

from Cornell in Cambodia Student Participants

Camille Edwards

My favorite memory was absolutely our time at Angkor Wat Temple. The overwhelming sense of calm, self-understanding, and spirit made it a memory that I will carry with me always, especially because of the rich understanding of the temple that the course offered us.

Alana Siquera

My favorite memory from traveling to Cambodia through CIC was visiting the incredible temple of Angkor Wat in Siem Reap before sunrise. With high spirits, our class awoke at 4:30 a.m. to venture to the religious monument. It was a breathtaking and unforgettable experience to witness the temple come to life with the rising of the sun.

Piragash Swargaloganathan

This paved the way to understand not only the politics of arts, but also the politics of patronage of arts and higher educational institutions in contemporary society. Best of my memories from this class are discussing intricate politics and the symbolism of art, walking around Angkor Thom and Angkor Wat with my fellow classmates, Alexandra (TA), and Professor Kaja. I consider the opportunity to participate in this program and also to visit Cambodia a privilege and would like to extend my sincere admiration to the hospitality and resilience of the Cambodian people, whose culture and arts we were able to enjoy and attempt to understand.

Miguel Martinez

I have a few [memorable activities]; I'll give you a positive one: Angkor Wat. Seeing the stories and rich cultural history of Cambodia being displayed in stone was beautiful. Another memorable one is also sad. We went to a Khmer Rouge prison camp. It was profoundly heartbreaking to be in that space, where so many people died and suffered. Both of these are really memorable experiences.²

¹ The complete interview with artist Leang Seckon conducted by Yean Reaksmeay, curator at Java Café and Gallery, can be viewed on the personal academia website of Reaksmeay: <https://soas.academia.edu/REAKSMEAYeanGEORGE>.

² For the complete interview with Miguel Martinez, conducted by Jenna Bittenbender, SEAP's former coordinator of new initiatives, see seap.einaudi.cornell.edu/story/undergrad-spotlight-miguel-martinez.



by Abigail Chen,
undergraduate in
government and
China and Asia-
Pacific studies

July 13, 2016

Wat Chas, Phnom Penh

Along with hundreds of Cambodian mourners, I waited in line, inside the Buddhist pagoda, to pay my deepest respect to Dr. Kem Ley, who was murdered in a downtown coffee shop three days earlier. The execution-style killing of Cambodia's most prominent political analyst, known as a frequent critic of the ruling government, left the nation shocked and grieving. Most vividly I remembered the question that a Cambodian friend posed to me: *"What does it mean to be a 'Cambodian,' if even speaking the truth means risking your life?"* I was left speechless.

My two-month internship in Cambodia at the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP) generated more puzzles than answers. After more than thirty years of authoritarian rule, Cambodia is left struggling to articulate a cohesive national identity. The search for a Cambodian identity is an unsettling exploration.

Cambodia's Search for Identity



Reconciling with the Past

I remember my first sight of the massive, deserted runway in Kampong Chhnang's airport during the winter 2016 Cornell in Cambodia program. The runway is set in an idyllic plain of coconut palm groves and vast rice paddies. It was unnerving and extraordinary. Arguably the most grandiose construction during the Khmer Rouge regime, the airport is actually one of the lesser known killing fields. By the late 1970s, an estimated 350,000 people, mostly political prisoners labeled "enemies" of the state, were lost in building the airport. The remnants of murder and the ghosts of the past are even more chilling at the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, or S-21. The unfurnished small cellblocks, iron beds, and manacles to which the prisoners were chained, along with photos of murder victims, powerfully perpetuate the horrible suffering of 1975–79.

Grappling with these memories of terror, misery, and death is a harrowing endeavor, given the extent of the devastation. In this respect, Cambodia is a divided nation. In a country with an exceptionally high rate of post-traumatic stress disorder, a segment of Cambodians share a silent and tacit consensus to bury the murderous past of 1975–79. This code of silence is also supported by the Buddhist belief of "individual helplessness," as ninety-five percent of the people are Theravada Buddhists.

The other segment of the country acknowledges that this attitude of strategic forgetfulness obstructs the democratic discourse in Cambodia. They actively seek advocacy for finding justice and accountability. During my two summer months in Cambodia, I interacted with several researchers at the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), who had implemented a wide range of social reconciliation projects. Soon I became familiar with a DC-Cam initiative, the Peace Center, established in the city of Anlong Veng, which was the final stronghold of the Khmer Rouge regime. Despite the intimidating complexity of building and sustaining open-minded discussions of such a difficult past, the Peace Center has made significant strides to understand violent and nonviolent behaviors. Additionally, by collaborating with schools and educating the local communities since its inception in 2014, the Peace Center has created structural mechanisms that serve to prevent conflict.

A Country of Contradictions

In today's Cambodia, other contradictions abound such as a disconnect between the country's ancient spiritualism and modern materialism; the friction between the "top five percent" and the socially underprivileged; and perhaps most important, the gap between the peoples' aspiration for democracy and the authoritarian governance under Hun Sen, who was awarded for being "the longest serving head of government in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (he has ruled the country under various titles since 1985). It seems that the country has yet to explore these deepening tensions. The hope is that once Cambodia recognizes and reconciles these dualities, it will become a more pluralistic and resilient nation.

The most problematic tension to me, however, lies in the growing distrust of the incumbent government that is felt by the people, especially among the youth. The assassination of Kem Ley the summer I was in Cambodia and the protests it triggered reflect this societal unrest. The underlying tensions between the authoritarian government and the people have intensified in recent years due to a conflation of domestic and international factors. The people have vocalized their demands that the present government make fundamental changes such as eliminating the culture of impunity, corruption, and nepotism; improving the human rights record; abolishing land grabbing; preventing deforestation; creating a transparent National Election Committee; and the list continues. On the international level, concerns surrounding Cambodia's lack of national identity have deepened due to the increasingly intrusive political and economic presence of China in the country.

During my summer internship at the CICP, I was able to see firsthand how the South China Sea conflicts affect China's relations with Cambodia. What struck me most was the frustration felt by Cambodian students and researchers. Extremely dependent upon China's infrastructure and money, Cambodia lacks autonomy in its foreign policy making, which further decreases Cambodians' faith in finding a national identity that is uniquely Cambodian.

I do not intend to portray only the grim realities of the Cambodian society that I saw. Although Cambodia faces serious political, economic, and social limitations, various mechanisms exist, which allow the incorporation of diverse interests and preferences that enable newer political actors to advocate for clean politics and government accountability. For example, social media drives youth involvement in politics, despite many fears of the political costs associated



Left: The Royal Palace.

Top: The Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP), the institution where the author interned.

with explicitly criticizing the ruling party. Hope for truly liberal reforms and good governance also exists in the increasingly dynamic political discussions organized by groups of young, enthusiastic, and social-media-savvy Cambodians. In new youth-led platforms such as the Politikoffee, one can find Cambodian researchers and students heatedly debating topics, ranging from electoral reform and rule of law to gender expression and labor migration policy.

It has been twenty-six years since the signing of the 1991 Paris Peace Agreement that ended the Cambodia conflict, but peace remains fragile in Cambodia. This is, in part, because of the seemingly irreconcilable contradictions that the Cambodian society both inherited from its chaotic 70s and nurtured in the years afterward as it rapidly modernized. Cambodia is not alone in facing such societal conflicts, though its challenges are steep, given that a mere forty years ago the social fabric of the country had been completely devastated. The need to reconcile differences and negotiate a Cambodian identity among opposing perspectives is critical to achieving lasting peace.

August 1, 2016

CICP, Phnom Penh

On the last day of my internship, the deputy director of the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace, Mr. Sovachana Pou, left me a message: “Thank you for your contribution. Here is the advice from Joseph Mussomeli, the former US Ambassador to Cambodia: ‘Be careful because Cambodia is the most dangerous country you will ever visit. You will fall in love with it, and eventually it will break your heart.’ I hope by exposing you to the political reality of what happens today, Cambodia hasn’t broken your heart yet. Best wishes!”

“What does it mean to be a ‘Cambodian’ today?” My friend’s question still lingered and prompted me to reflect more. In all honesty, I still don’t know how to sufficiently answer that question, but at least now I am more certain that the topic of negotiating national identity is what I would like to explore in my studies at Cornell. ☞



A field trip to Anlong Veng, the last stronghold of the Khmer Rouge, during the author’s first visit to Cambodia through the Cornell-in-Cambodia 2016 program.

I AM TRULY INDEBTED to the people and institutions that made my summer experience in Cambodia possible and meaningful. I am greatly thankful for Professor Andrew Mertha. It was through his Cornell in Cambodia program and seminar on the history of political violence in Cambodia that I fell madly in love with the country. His continued support for my research on Cambodian politics convinced me to undertake the summer internship at the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP). Mr. Pou Sovachana, my supervisor at CICP, has taught me the invaluable lessons of compassion and persistence in striving for the democratic development of Cambodia. Moreover, SEAP generously funded my summer experience. My passion for studying Cambodian society has also been supported by the unique Khmer language learning resources that Cornell provides. Studying Khmer in the fall 2016 and spring 2017 semesters with Professor Hannah Phan was a formative experience for me. Learning this graceful language, I came to better understand the history and culture of Cambodia, a country that continues to fascinate me.

AUTHOR BIO:

Abigail Chen is a junior at Cornell University, where she majors in government and China and Asia-Pacific studies. A native of the bustling southern Chinese city of Guangzhou, she has traveled to over half of the Southeast Asian countries. She visited Cambodia for the first time through the Cornell in Cambodia program, led by Professor Andrew Mertha, during the winter of 2016 and went back for a two-month internship at the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace the summer afterward.

Thai Spirit Mediums, Jesus, and an Anthropologist in Bangkok



by Erick White,
assistant professor of Asian
languages and cultures at
University of Michigan and
former SEAP visiting fellow

Establishing rapport with one's informants and a meaningful place in their lives is a perennial anxiety for any ethnographer. During my year and a half of research on the subculture of professional spirit mediums (*khon song cao*) in and around Bangkok, I struggled constantly to carve out an honest, legible, and empathetic public role and identity in my interactions with the wide variety of spirit mediums, followers, and clients I encountered on a regular basis. I felt comfortable within many of the identities ascribed to me, since they demanded minimal personal adjustment and few potential conflicts. I was an inquiring stranger, a foreigner interested in Buddhism, and a graduate student carrying out doctoral research. Other stereotypic roles and identities within the subculture of spirit mediums were difficult to wear so lightly, however, since they imposed more constraints, required more negotiation, and fostered more potential misunderstanding. Was I perhaps also a client seeking spiritual advice, the member of a particular medium's entourage, a devoted follower, or even a wealthy financial backer?

These dilemmas shadowed me throughout my research. For example, one November afternoon a few weeks before I would be returning home, I stopped by the suburban Bangkok residence of two spirit mediums I knew well and who had facilitated my study of Bangkok professional mediums. Neither Somchai nor Pong—spirit mediums of the Chinese bodhisattva Avalokitesvara and the Hindu god Vishnu—were home. But Chotima, a key follower whose responsibility it was to watch over and take care of Somchai's and Pong's "celestial abode" (*tamnak*), let me in. *Tamnak* can range from a single room in a house to a large multistory building. As private shrines open to the public, they are (minimally) organized around an altar of sacralized statues and a throne upon which mediums receive clients and followers. Chotima was almost always watching over Somchai's and Pong's celestial abode, and she was eager to chat after a long, slow day during which few clients or friends had dropped by.

Our conversation drifted across various topics. We talked about past ceremonies and the personalities of the different *thep* (divinities) and *cao* (celestial lords) who possessed Somchai and Pong. We talked about mutual friends and the unknown future. She asked, as she had asked so many times before, when I was leaving to



Altar inside a 'celestial abode' (*tamnak*).

go home and, more important, when I would return to Thailand. In a fanciful, almost pie-in-the-sky manner that even she recognized as unlikely, Chotima raised the hope of someday visiting me in America. And then later, after darkness had fully set in across the housing estate in which the abode was located, she asked me with great interest and sincerity a question I had been asked many times previously: Did I think perhaps I had an *ong* (a divine entity) within me, and if I returned to America, might I not set up an abode there, an abode to Phra Yesu (Jesus)? No, I assured her, I was pretty sure I was not the host of any possessing gods, and I didn't anticipate opening up a celestial abode to Lord Jesus

No, I assured her, I was pretty sure I was not the host of any possessing gods, and I didn't anticipate opening up a celestial abode to Lord Jesus in Ithaca.

in Ithaca. She acknowledged my (by now) standard answer. But she was rather quiet and sad nonetheless, declaring in the end that one never really knows what the future holds, especially when it involves *thep* and *cao*. I agreed, although I was quite certain I would not be opening an abode of my own in the near future.

During my research I found myself unwilling to occupy certain widely recognized roles within the subculture. One such role was the identity Chotima inquired about on that November afternoon: a follower who, finding himself possessed against his or her will by a divinity or celestial lord, learns to serve that *thep* or *cao*, often by eventually opening up his or her own celestial abode. As my research progressed I often worried that my unwillingness to even ambiguously entertain this possibility would create an uncomfortable social distance and breakdown of communication between myself and all my close informants. I also knew perfectly well that I couldn't fulfill even half of the expectations and obligations that Chotima and others attached to that particular role and identity. So I always denied—gently and respectfully, but firmly—the possibility as soon as it was voiced. Yet despite my repeated, clear refusal many, many times over the course of my fieldwork, in both serious and joking tones, the same question was asked of me: “*Mi ong Phra Yesu?*” (Does the Lord Jesus possess you?).

While at first perplexed by the question, over the course of my fieldwork I eventually realized that this curious inquiry revealed some basic truths, not only about who Bangkok professional spirit mediums and their followers are, but also who I was to them. Most Thais who seek out spirit mediums at a celestial abode are interested in navigating the ups and downs of auspiciousness and inauspiciousness. They are seeking divine assistance and intervention with regard to a business deal, a family drama, or a lingering health problem. They are in need of someone who can more expertly navigate the

unseen cosmological currents of fate, fortune, and luck. But a significant minority of clients suffer from chaotic experiences of lost consciousness, strange behavior, and unexplainable dreams and desires. They wonder if they are being possessed by a divine entity (*mi ong*), and they ask spirit mediums the very question that Chotima asked me. One of the responsibilities of spirit mediums is to find out if this is the case, and if so, to identify what divinity or celestial lord is possessing the client and what they require of the client.

Moreover, a majority of the individuals who develop intimate, enduring social ties with professional spirit mediums and become followers (*looksit*) rather than merely clients intermittently display trance and trancelike behavior. While it isn't necessary that the inner circle of assistants and followers in a spirit medium's entourage be possessed by a divine entity, it can be relatively common. There is great variety in how regularly, how intensely, and how dramatically this trance possession is displayed by entourage members, but it is a shared experience

that many of them discuss with each other. Talking through an unusual experience, which is both pleasurable and confusing, valorized yet intimidating, constitutes a mutual source of social bonding, intimacy, and identification among entourage members. Considering how much time in the field I spent with the entourage of Somchai and Pong, it was not surprising, therefore, that members in that entourage frequently asked me whether I too might be experiencing moments of trance possession. They were, in short, trying to make sense of my continuing immersion in their lives, according to the subculture's norms and expectations.

That so many individuals in this entourage asked me whether my *ong* was Lord Jesus reflects another fundamental fact about the subculture of Bangkok professional spirit mediums. The divinities and celestial lords that possess individuals are karmically entangled in the lives of mediums, followers, and clients. In past lives they were associates, friends, or family, and a subtle resonance—biographically and culturally—often exists between the possessing spirit and the host. The detailed mythic accounts of those gods, kings, royalty, cultural heroes, bodhisattvas, hermits, and other figures that possess Thais often obliquely parallel, evoke, or intersect with the mundane biographical histories of their human hosts.

It is not necessary that gender, ethnicity, or culture align between divinity and host, and, in fact, members of the subculture enjoy and value the performative transgression and uncertainty that arises when they do not. Young ethnic Thai men may be possessed by the Hindu goddess Kali, and older Sino-Thai women may be possessed by the Thai King Chulalongkorn, for example. However, given my dramatically foreign identity—one doesn't find many Westerners circulating within the subculture—I suspect Chotima and others thought that if I were possessed by a divinity, that god would most likely be culturally familiar to me in order to ease recognition and acceptance on my part. If I were to be a host to

Thai, Chinese, or Hindu divinities, those would arrive later, after Lord Jesus. A similar unfolding parade of possessing spirits was a common experience within the subculture.

A select number of clients and followers within the subculture who discover that they “have a divine entity” eventually open a celestial abode and go on to serve the general public. It is a common initial step along the more expansive career path of professional spirit mediums. Not all do, however. Many individuals simply set up an alter or shrine in their home and perform regular acts of devotion to their possessing divinities. Others might provide irregular assistance to friends, family, and neighbors without much fanfare. But for those who feel the calling very strongly or discover they have a deeper karmic obligation to fulfill, opening a celestial abode is an expected and even necessary affair.

Such a public expression of spiritual commitment is praised within the subculture and perceived as a public confirmation of identification and belonging. Often this step is only pursued by individuals who have spent a good amount of time within the subculture and who have learned, along the way, the practical ins and outs of running an abode. The fact that as an anthropologist I had immersed myself in the everyday life of Somchai’s and Pong’s celestial abode and was especially

interested in understanding their skills and techniques in managing the abode was interpreted not as a sign of anthropological methodological rigor, but as a possible indication that I, too, might have a future of divine dreams, revelation, and spiritual service awaiting me.

In all of these ways Somchai, Pong, and their entourage members were simply trying to make sense of my ethno-

Many individuals simply set up an alter or shrine in their home and perform regular acts of devotion to their possessing divinities.

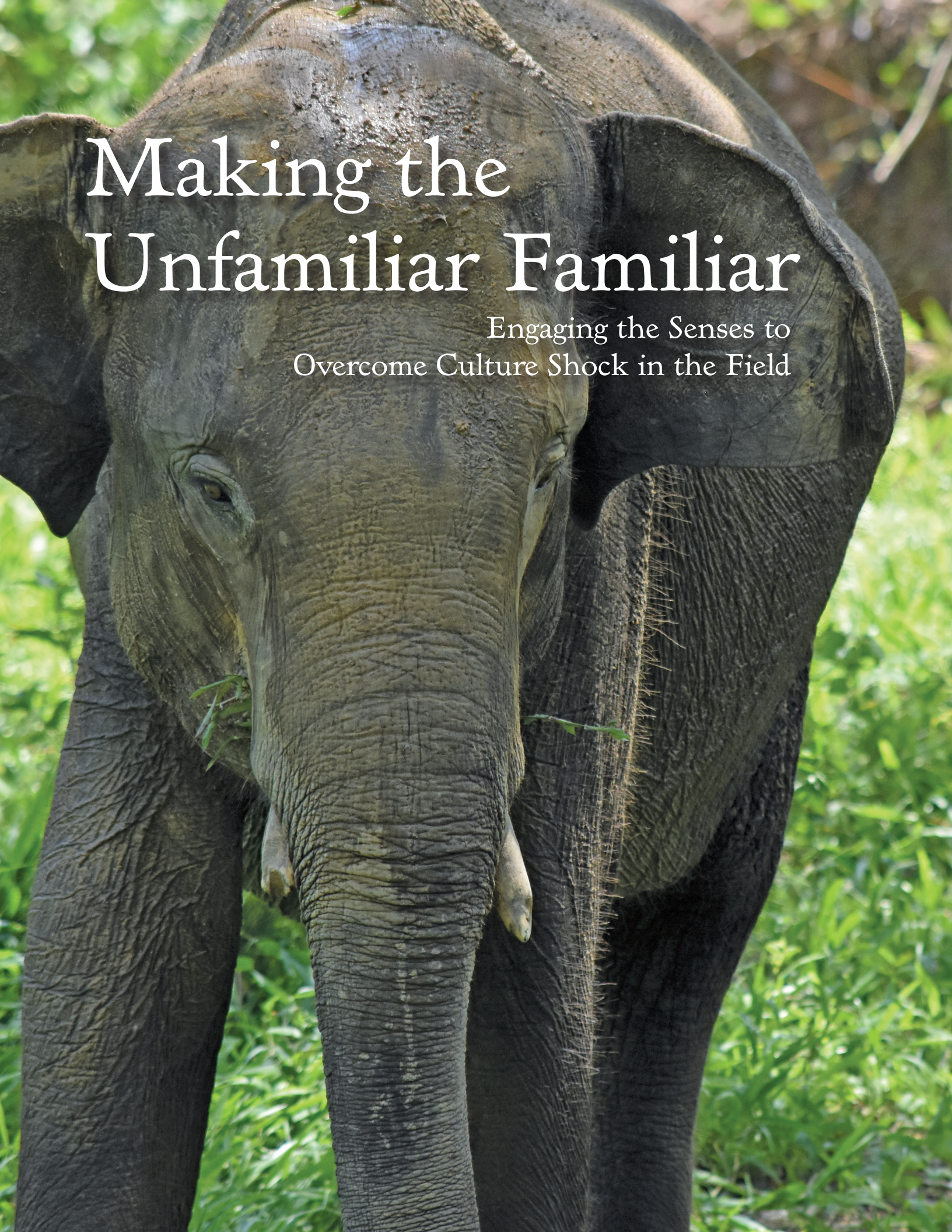
graphic work habits, according to their subculture’s conventional norms and expectations. Just as I was seeking to translate their beliefs and practices into my scholarly frames of reference, they were seeking to translate my behavior and statements into their cultural frame of reference. Asking if I was possessed by Lord Jesus and inquiring whether I might someday open my own celestial abode in America simply reflected this effort to naturalize me in terms that intuitively made sense to them. Nonetheless, they also regularly recognized that I was not like the typical Thai who was interested and active within the subculture. It was not just that I was a foreigner who was culturally odd in unexpected ways; I also asked a lot of unusual questions and was frequently scribbling down observations in a notebook. They loved to tease me about my strange American habits and my incessant note-taking. Frequently wondering how much I was like them and constantly joking about how different I was from them, my informants repeatedly negotiated the differences between us. In the process, they made provisional sense of me and cultivated a welcoming place for me as a temporary sojourner in their everyday lives of divinities, possession, karma, and auspiciousness. ☸



Left: Entourage member posing before a statue of Avalokitesvara.

Right: Entourage members relaxing.





Making the Unfamiliar Familiar

Engaging the Senses to
Overcome Culture Shock in the Field

There is nothing that can truly prepare one for the experience of culture shock.

I'LL NEVER FORGET my first night in the Leuser Ecosystem of Northern Sumatra, Indonesia—the enormous winged insects, the humidity, the unfamiliar foods, and my stiff neck from sleeping on the floorboards. A sweaty ten-hour day of primate tracking followed night one. After four leeches attached themselves to my head, neck, and legs, I was ready to leave the forest and not return.

As I began to navigate this unfamiliar territory, I sought encouragement from anthropologists. In his book *Sensual Relations: Engaging the Senses in Cultural and Social Theory*, David Howes invites researchers to engage all senses as they step beyond the boundaries of their comfort zone. Having only had prior field experience in marine environments, the dense, dark forest was certainly an unfamiliar territory for me. Howes describes this opposition of land and sea, noting that “oceans are purifying and uplifting, while dense land areas can feel heavy with no escape from the smell of fermenting life.”¹

Anthropology provides many definitions for culture. One, in particular, that I became acquainted with in the forest is the idea that culture is collectively the things we take for granted. It is easy to take our comforts such as a bed for granted until we end up in strange places without them.

Interestingly, it is this same strangeness that *draws* us as researchers to explore unfamiliar places. I traveled to Indonesia to pursue a greater understanding of the extraordinary Leuser Ecosystem—the only remaining place on Earth where orangutans, tigers, elephants, and rhinos still live together among lush greenery. Conducting research in the Indonesian forests, I chose to overcome the challenges of leaving my comfort zone by immersing myself in the sensations of this new place: the tingling of the river on my skin after a long day in the field; the brilliance of the stars at night and the sounds of the forest at sunrise; the prickly hairs on the rough head of Tanti, the elephant; the taste of the local



by Marilyn Brody, MPS,
international development, 2017



Above: Our cook pictured in the kitchen who prepared three meals daily for our team of five.
Below: Steps leading from the riverboat up to our shelter in the forest.





Left: Indonesian children in the village adjacent to the protected field site who welcomed the opportunity for a quick photoshoot. Right: Su, the local field expert on site, detangling fresh caught fish from the net he had cast in the river the evening prior. Below: Lunch break at a 30-story waterfall discovered only by those willing to navigate a particularly unforgiving forest terrain.

spices flavoring fresh-caught fish from the river. These sensations became part of my routine. They became familiar, and in familiarity I found comfort.

Such intimate encounters with the Indonesian tropical forests deepened my awareness for this unique and sensitive landscape. As a researcher and conservationist, my desire is both to *retell* and *relive* the story of my experiences. I found that photography was the perfect medium for my research. Photography

engages other people, enabling them to witness the beauty and value of critical natural environments without traveling to them. Photography also has a way of bringing experiences to life long after a moment has passed. Just as a familiar scent can transport us back to a specific time and space, a visual representation of a moment can trigger the senses and induce a state of familiarity. Early visual anthropologist and member of Cornell University's multidisciplinary research

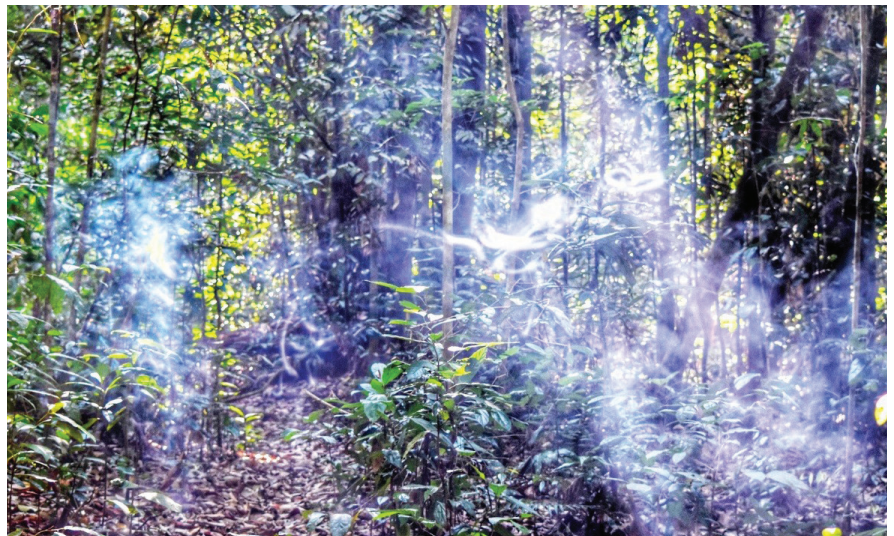
team John Collier published *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method*, a 1967 textbook widely in use today. Like Collier and all anthropologists who use visual methods in their work, I experienced the unique ability of photography not only to engage my senses, but also to capture and transport through time and space the sensations that make the unfamiliar familiar.²

After a month of research and exploration, I sat reflecting under my favorite





tree on the river. Suddenly, our generator shut off, and I became encapsulated by darkness. The absence of the generator's hums left sound space for the flow of the river and the deep reverberation of the living forest around me. All I could see was the faint outline of the forest canopy against a sky full of diamond stars shining with a brilliance I had never before experienced. In that moment, my senses became so saturated that I lost myself. I became part of the Indonesian landscape, a place in this world I now consider home. ≡



Top: Tanti, the majestic village elephant, just before we took her for a swim in the river.

Middle: Smoke of the locals' clove cigarettes encapsulates the forest as we recorded the movements of primates never seen before in the area.

Left: Rakel the orangutan casually modeling at hour five of our ten-hour primate track.

¹ David Howes, *Sensual Relations: Engaging the Senses in Culture and Social Theory* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010).

² John Collier Jr. and Malcolm Collier, *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method* (1967; repr. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986).

The Language of Jakarta

past and present



by Ferdinan Okki
Kurniawan, PhD
candidate in linguistics



HAVING BEEN BORN AND RAISED IN JAKARTA, INDONESIA, I am constantly amazed by the high level of linguistic diversity in this city. The Indonesian archipelagos are home to six hundred to seven hundred living local languages. The high population density in this national capital creates extensive interethnic and linguistic interaction among the inhabitants of this vibrant and boisterous metropolitan area.

I spent my childhood in the middle of Kampung Betawi, on the outskirts of Jakarta. My childhood friends came from various ethnicities, but most of them were Betawi children who spoke Betawi Malay, an indigenous variety of Malay. As a child I was immersed in Javanese family traditions, since both my parents are Javanese who moved from Yogyakarta (central Java) to Jakarta. Although I was exposed to Javanese language and culture at home, I did not become a fluent speaker of

Javanese. The linguistic input from other surrounding languages, namely Betawi Malay and Standard Indonesian, jelled more in my mind.

This complex linguistic heritage inspired me to study more about Indonesian linguistics. For this reason, five years ago I applied to the PhD program in linguistics at Cornell. Among Southeast Asian linguists Cornell is famously known as an excellent place to study Southeast Asian and Austronesian languages, and it is equally known for our very own Southeast Asia Program.

My dissertation project investigates cross-generational language transmission in my native language, Jakarta Indonesian, which is a complex blend of Betawi Malay and Standard Indonesian. Jakarta Indonesian originally developed from Betawi Malay, a variety of Malay that emerged in Jakarta around the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and was heavily influenced

by Portuguese, Dutch, Arabic, Chinese, and the surrounding local languages such as Sundanese, Balinese, and Javanese. Standard Indonesian is the formal and national language of Indonesia and is cultivated by the National Language Board formed by the Indonesian government.

Indonesian was declared the future language of Indonesia in the 1928 Youth Pledge. In 1945, after World War II, the country gained independence from the Dutch and established Standard Indonesian as the national language. It was then declared as the national language with the founding of Indonesia in 1945. A vernacular language emerged after World War II, with a huge influx of economic immigrants to the capital city. These immigrants came from various parts of Indonesia, speaking their own local languages. The second generation of these immigrant families has been forming a new linguistic variety,

shifting away from their parents' local vernaculars. This new variety is called Jakarta Indonesian by some scholars.

As a relatively new variety, Jakarta Indonesian has reached a high level of language vitality within only a few decades. Under Professor Abby Cohn's supervision, my research attempts to shed light on the development of Jakarta Indonesian through phonological patterns transmitted over three generations of speakers. I investigate these patterns, using large-scale naturalistic speech corpora collected from three generations of Jakarta Indonesian speakers. They consist of adult speech from the 1970s, adult speech from the 2000s, and pre-adolescent speech from the 2000s.

The data from the 1970s is part of Dr. Stephen Wallace's doctoral thesis. Wallace was a graduate student in the Department of Linguistics at Cornell and worked closely with Professor John Wolff. Wallace generously sent me the corpus that he collected from various subdistricts in Jakarta in the early 1970s. The digitization of Wallace's corpus, in collaboration with Olin Library, is now available and open to scholars around the world through eCommons, Cornell's digital repository.¹ I hope that this searchable corpus may be beneficial to other linguists who want to study it in the future. The data from the 2000s was collected by the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Jakarta Field Station. I was involved in this documentation and database creation project from 2000–07.

My study finds that some Betawi Malay phonological forms were still produced in a robust distribution by Jakarta Indonesian speakers in the 1970s but sharply decreased in the 2000s data, regardless of gender and educational background. This abrupt decline in the use of certain patterns between speakers in the 1970s and 2000s suggests a change in progress that happens where unfaithful or broken language transmission occurs cross-generationally. This is due to the successful story of Standard Indonesian cultivation by the Indonesian government. The crucial time of the modernization of Indonesian was between 1966

and 1998, when Indonesia was under the Soeharto regime.² The government viewed standardization of Indonesian as one of its major initiatives to support the stability of the nation and the economic development program. This has caused speakers of the local languages to use more Indonesian, leaving behind their parents' languages. In my investigation, although we can still see a trace of Betawi Malay as the more conservative variety, the tendency to produce more Standard Indonesian forms is unavoidable among Jakarta Indonesian speakers.

While it might seem ironic for me to be studying my own native language in Ithaca—across the globe from my hometown in Jakarta—it has many advantages. Not only have I had the opportunity to combine the resources of an outstanding Department of Linguistics at Cornell and SEAP, I have also had the opportunity to learn about Indonesia, not on its own but as part of Southeast Asia.

I gained this new intellectual perspective by joining the SEAP community. In addition to learning from the SEAP Gatty Lecture Series, I gained enormous insight into Southeast Asia as a region when I assisted in teaching the course *Introduction to Southeast Asia*, taught by Professor Arnika Fuhrmann. As a foundational course, the class showed me the importance of transdisciplinary, transnational, and transregional approaches to studying this region, well known for its expansive geography and great cultural, social, and linguistic diversity. As a linguist, I was excited when Professor Tom Pepinsky contacted me about the opportunity to develop and teach an Indonesian in Foreign Language Across the Curriculum (FLAC) class. FLAC courses are open to students whose language skills are at the intermediate level or above and provide an additional opportunity for them to practice. With Lisa Sansoucy, FLAC coordinator, and the support of Professors Eric Tagliacozzo and Tamara Loos, we developed the first Indone-



James Lowell Jackson, Anissa Rahadiningtyas, Ferdinan Okki Kurniawan in the Indonesian FLAC class, spring 2017.

sian FLAC course in spring 2016. Indonesian FLAC was embedded in and shared between two parent courses: *Southeast Asian Politics*, taught by Professor Pepinsky, and *Southeast Asian History from the 18th Century*, cotaught by Professors Tagliacozzo and Loos.

The second Indonesian FLAC course was offered in spring 2017. It was embedded in the parent course *Monsoon Kingdoms: Pre-Modern Southeast Asian History*, taught by Professor Tagliacozzo. I found that this integrated model of a cross-disciplinary approach has proved to be an effective and efficient method for students to learn Indonesian as a foreign language and to acquire the content knowledge from the parent courses at the same time. I also think that this initiative is an excellent way to promote a less commonly taught language such as Indonesian in an academic context. The mixture of native speakers, heritage, and “bottom-up” learners is unique to FLAC. As a native speaker of Indonesian, I was very glad that I could facilitate the Indonesian FLAC courses. This is a rare opportunity, unique to Cornell. FLAC courses would not be possible without support from SEAP.

I hope that my research on Indonesian languages can contribute to the field of Southeast Asian/Austronesian linguistics. I am grateful for my involvement in the SEAP community, which has significantly shaped and enriched my research and scholarly journey as a doctoral student and as a native Indonesian. ☞

¹ Cornell eCommons, <https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/45568/recent-submissions>.

² James Sneddon, (2003). *The Indonesian Language: Its History and Role in Modern Society* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2003).



FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Hannah Phan, Senior Lecturer, Khmer



“The resources for teaching are often found embedded in Cambodian life. One must seek these resources almost exclusively in Cambodia itself. I often make short video clips of Cambodian life to use in Khmer classes. I would like to thank SEAP, the Department of Asian Studies, and the Language Resource Center for their support in making this possible. The rewarding part of my job is to see students who open their hearts and minds, not only to the people, but to the ecology of the country, land, culture, and different aspects of Cambodian life.”

Interviewed and edited by Deborah Membreno, master's student, international development, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, 2017, former SEAP outreach graduate assistant

Deborah Membreno: What has your academic journey been like from a student to the prominent lecturer you are today?

Hannah Phan: It has been a very long journey from student to senior lecturer. When I was eight years old I liked to pick tamarinds under tamarind trees. One day I realized I had to do school work and that studying was more important than having tamarinds. That realization was the beginning of my academic life. My journey started from a little girl who liked to read and felt a sense of urgency to do well in school.

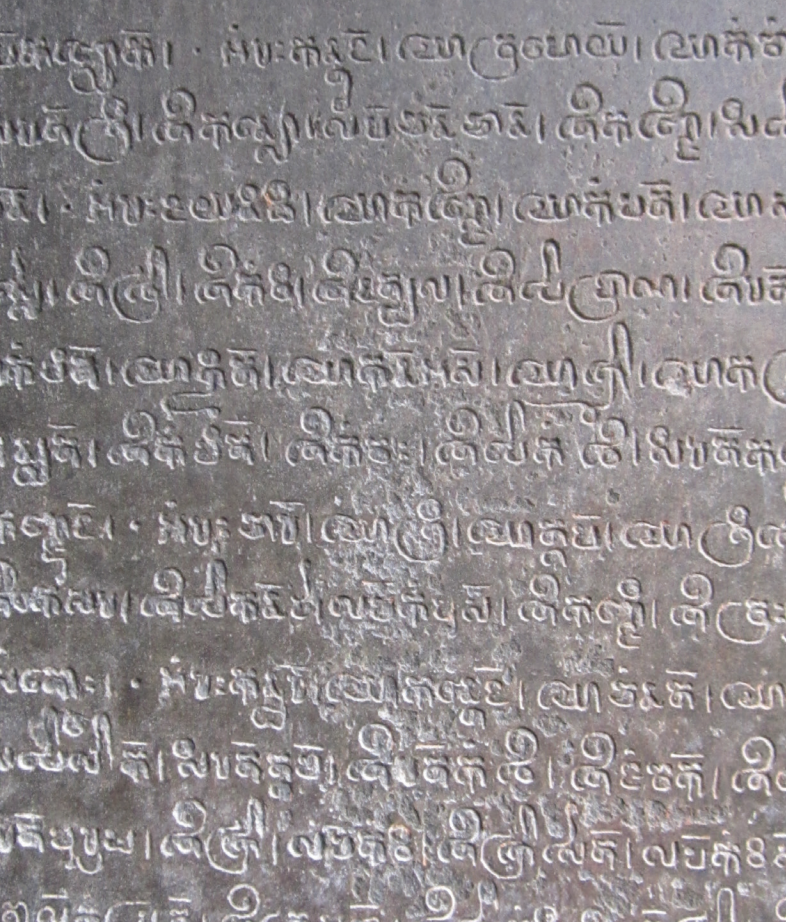
DM: What initially led you to your field of study, and how did that develop into your research focus today?

HP: First, the journey led me to the University of Phnom Penh. Following my studies at Phnom Penh, I received a bachelor's degree from the Institute of Pedagogy in Russia in Russian language and literature. After completing my degree I became a language teacher. I also received additional training at the

Regional Language Centre in Singapore as an English language teacher. It was the first time that I studied with teachers from many Southeast Asian countries. My journey then led me to Cornell, and I graduated with a master's degree in international development. I taught Khmer for the first time at Cornell in 1999. After a brief hiatus I returned to Cornell as a language teacher in 2005 and continue to work at Cornell today.

DM: What has been your experience as a language teacher that you find valuable to share?

HP: As a language teacher, the most wonderful thing to do is to expose students to a completely different world and culture, much like Cornell gives to me. My academic journey is to set forth young exciting explorers and introduce them to a new world through language. Through my academic effort I give them the raw materials for intellectual growth. It is like planting new seeds and hoping they will someday bear fruit. Students may study a vari-



IN FALL 2017 HANNAH PHAN WILL TEACH KHMER 1100: Elements of Khmer Language and Culture. This course will introduce basic Khmer language and elements of Khmer culture to anyone interested. It is a one-credit course intended for people who want to go to Cambodia and for those who are interested in the subject matter and do not have time to do the regular four-credit course.

Left: Champei is a Khmer name for plumeria or frangipani. It's one of the most popular fragrant flowers in Cambodia.

Above left: Ancient Khmer script on a temple wall. Above right: Leather carving class in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

ety of topics such as ancient Khmer art, history, economics, labor unions, ecology, and biology. The possibilities are endless, but all require knowledge of Khmer language and culture.

DM: Where have your latest travels taken you, and what was that experience like?

HP: This last winter I traveled to Cambodia where I interviewed people and developed teaching materials for my classes. I interviewed people who worked at schools, at libraries, and on the streets of Phnom Penh. These interviews are part of the material development for my language classes. On this trip I learned about the increased number of books held at the national archives, the national library, and the Center for Khmer Studies' library. One of the most exciting parts of my trip was having the opportunity to give a talk to the Cornell in Cambodia class led by Professor Kaja McGowan. In winter 2015, I also spoke to Professor Andrew Mertha's Cornell in Cambodia class about my experience in Cambo-

dia during the Khmer Rouge time. A former classical dancer from the University of Fine Arts also joined me to talk about the definitions of basic gestures in Cambodian classical dances. The most exciting part of the meeting was that the students got to wear Cambodian folk dance costumes.

DM: What are the most challenging and the most rewarding parts of your job?

HP: One of the challenges is that the resources for teaching are often found embedded in Cambodian life. One must seek these resources almost exclusively in Cambodia itself. I often make short video clips of Cambodian life to use in Khmer classes. I would like to thank SEAP, the Department of Asian Studies, and the Language Resource Center for their support in making this possible. The rewarding part of my job is to see students who open their hearts and minds, not only to the people, but to the ecology of the country, land, culture, and different aspects of Cambodian life. Some of them went back to

Cambodia and brought their families with them. Other students came back from Cambodia and sent me emails about how much they loved the country and its people. Their travel is a lifetime experience that introduces them to the many opportunities in Cambodia for young people.

DM: How have you worked with SEAP or its resources during your time at Cornell?

HP: I traveled to Cambodia to develop teaching materials. I would like to thank SEAP for providing funding to make this happen.

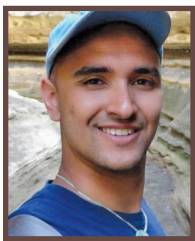
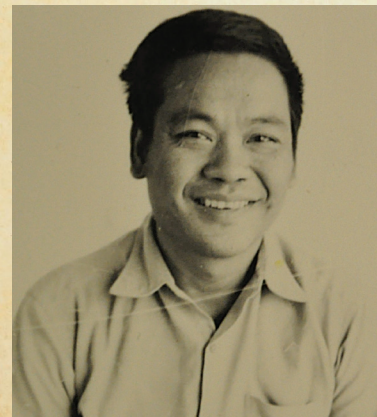
DM: Do you have any advice for current students or prospective students?

HP: I came to understand languages other than my native tongue and the wonderful opportunities such learning has given me. I recommend current or prospective students understand this new language, Khmer, and discover the wonderful opportunities it will offer them.

Experiencing a genocide is far from over. Speeches made in Congress and the United Nations have already pointed to the existence of a Yazidi Genocide in Iraq; however, there is little scope for action from governments because it has not yet been declared official. Darfur is still left to fend for itself, even though international law dictates action after recognition by a State (in this case from the US Congress). The experience of genocide seems so distant in memory (the Holocaust) and distance (Rwanda and Cambodia) that the idea of 'never again' remains unrealized.

Teaching Genocide

Using Kroch Library Resources to Prompt Inquiry and Reflection



by Gaurav Toor,
PhD candidate in
comparative politics
and government

RECOGNIZING THE EXPERIENCE OF GENOCIDES is critical to preventing them. When State leaders have little political will for intervention, it is us—students, citizens, and leaders—who remain key to checking the conditions of genocides and stopping them. In fall 2016 I taught an undergraduate class at Cornell called Recognizing Genocide. The goal of the course was to use archival materials in Kroch Library to expose students to evidence of genocide and prompt inquiry, analysis, and reflection.

Recognizing Genocide concentrated on the conditions, execution, and aftermath of the Rwandan genocide and Cambodian politicide (implicitly widely known as a genocide). It mixed social science with humanities to develop a holistic perspective on both the political structures surrounding genocides and the microlevel, people-to-people experiences. Through a number of readings, including Révérien

Rurangwa's *My Stolen Rwanda* and Henri Locard's *Pol Pot's Little Red Book*, the students learned the day-to-day experience of genocide and the strategies used by various actors in the political hierarchy to convince individuals to change their behavior toward strangers, neighbors, family, and themselves.¹ With its extensive resources, Cornell's Kroch Library was the perfect place to motivate questions and seek insights into the existence of genocides.

One student in the class, Hannah Pierce '19, linguistics, was puzzled by the actions of children, who would report on their own parents as spies. Questioning the image of innocence carried by children, she sought an explanation in the library archives. She wrote about what she discovered:

eration of our experiences and the context of our individual minds and intrinsic sense of morality created around them. Thus, the influence of such a regime is not inevitably impenetrable to basic human decency.

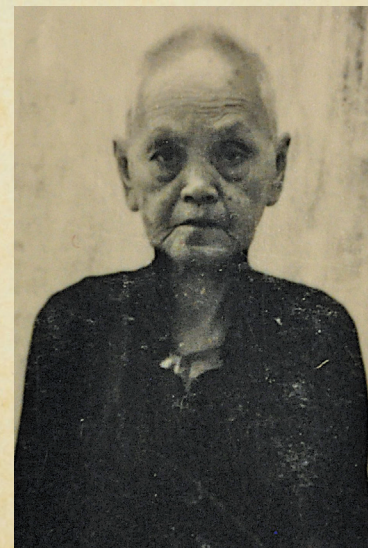
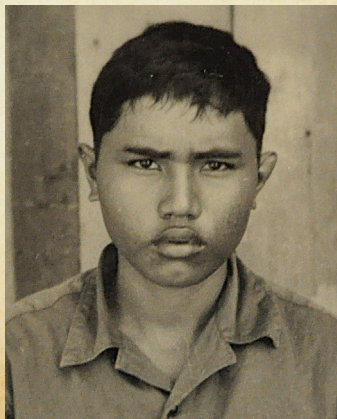
Digging deeper into the strategies used by the Khmer Rouge to extract subservience from not only children but across society, Michael Kaplin '16, economics, observed:

*At the helm of the Khmer Rouge, Pol Pot created an esoteric institution that used fear to align its soldiers and prisoners with the communist ideologies that he claimed would bring Cambodia back to Year Zero. Literature and media made available in the Kroch Collections such as the documentary film *The Conscience of Nhem Em*, directed by Steven Okazaki; *The Years of Zero: Coming of Age Under the Khmer**

over two million Cambodians, scarring the nation for centuries to come.

Questioning the idea of subservience, Gabi Tepper '19, biology and society, wanted to explore reasons for the absence of widespread revolt against the Khmer Rouge regime. She reflected:

When there is a genocide, there is always a need to have leaders who can rally the people together so they can fight back. These people are usually the intellectuals. Unfortunately, in Cambodia, the intellectuals had left before the genocide began or were killed early on by the Khmer Rouge. Still, why couldn't these prisoners rise up and revolt without the intellectuals? Remembering that eyes are the windows to the soul, I knew that was the key to my answer. After looking at the prisoners' blank stares in the photos from S-21 made available in the



The children of the Khmer Rouge provide a drastic example of the power a government can exercise over its constituent population, highlighting the potential for nationalism to promote hatred and division rather than unity. However, through the eyes of these Cambodian children, it is clear that potency and longevity of the Angkar's replicative familial influence is not obligatory. Standing on an essential tenet of human nature, each of us are not merely products of our environment. Rather, we are the conglom-

*Rouge, written by Seng Ty; and *Mother and the Tiger: A Memoir of the Killing Fields*, written by Dana Hu Lim demonstrate that, unlike genocidal leaders in the past who used hateful speech to unite their populations against their enemies, Pol Pot and his fellow leaders hid behind an all-seeing institution that turned Cambodians against one another. Fear was the lubrication that kept the killing machine oiled, turning soldiers, prisoners and families against one another, leading to the extermination of*

Kroch Collections for the second time, I saw something that I had not seen the first time: fear and acceptance. I saw now that their souls had been killed and replaced with such a strong sense of fear that they became passive rather than motivated to revolt. These prisoners were living in a world of mania and did not know who they could trust. The prisoners not only feared the spies that were among them, who would report anyone that appeared suspicious to the Khmer Rouge, but also were afraid of their psychotic lead-

ILLUMINATING A DARK HISTORY:

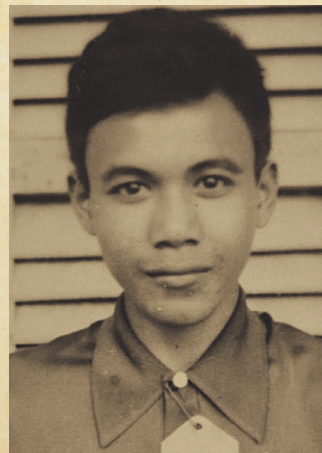
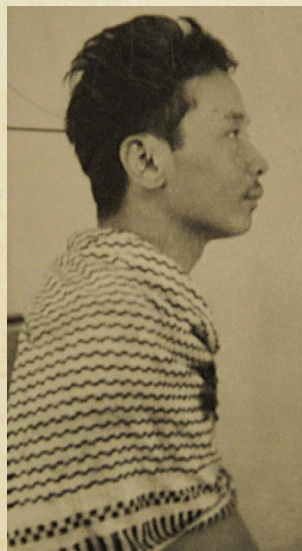
Records of Khmer Rouge Atrocities in Rare and Manuscripts Collection

by Gregory Green, curator, Echols Collection on Southeast Asia

The Tuol Sleng Confessions and Photographs collection in the John M. Echols Collection at Cornell University Library records a truly dark period in the history of Cambodia. The Tuol Sleng prison, also known as S-21, was used to imprison, torture, and kill Khmer Rouge cadre accused of betraying the movement. This is where the Khmer Rouge devoured their own, yet over time it has become one of the most visible symbols for the larger genocide that occurred in Cambodia from 1975–79.

For students studying war and genocide, it is never easy to understand why these types of atrocities happen. It is also difficult to imagine what life must have been like for those who lived and died during a genocidal event. Even more unnerving in this particular event is the fact that the Khmer Rouge thought it necessary to record images and forced confessions in such detail. Viewing thousands of photographs taken of people just before they were tortured and killed can quickly transform the issue from a theoretical classroom discussion into a stark reality as students flip through page after page of photographs.

The Tuol Sleng collection, reproduced from the archives at the prison-turned-museum in the early 1990s as a collaborative project between the museum and Cornell University Library, doubles as an important record of Khmer Rouge atrocities and a powerful teaching tool. Visitors can access the collection through the library's Rare and Manuscripts Collections by viewing the online finding guide and requesting material via the library catalog.²



ers. Their fear was so intense that it paralyzed them, and they had no idea how to take action and revolt. In order to survive, the prisoners would out other members in society. They even made up lies about who was working in the CIA or offered any names that they could think of. Everyone in S-21 was worn out, and there was a feeling of hopelessness.

The Kroch collections, from photographs and documentaries to memoirs and academic books, remain a treasure for any researcher invested in

understanding genocides. The three students featured above were able to find, through the collection, evidence and reasoning for subservience and fear that enhanced their understanding of genocides. The course assignments gave students the opportunity to utilize the resources available in SEAP and

the Kroch Library collections. Guiding students through an understanding of history is critical in preparing them to become more engaged global citizens, especially during this age of uncertainty and renewed political violence around the world. ☞

¹ Révérien Rurangwa, *Genocide: My Stolen Rwanda* (London: Reportage Press, 2009); and Henri Locard, *Pol Pot's Little Red Book: The Sayings of Angkar* (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 2004).

² The online finding guide can be accessed at rmc.library.cornell.edu/EAD/htmldocs/RMM04883.html. The library catalog can be found at www.library.cornell.edu.

New and forthcoming titles from SOUTHEAST ASIA PROGRAM PUBLICATIONS an imprint of Cornell University Press

SVAY

A Khmer Village in Cambodia

MAY MAYKO EBIHARA

EDITED BY ANDREW C. MERTHA

INTRODUCTION BY JUDY LEDGERWOOD

\$23.95 paper

May Mayko Ebihara (1934–2005) was the first American anthropologist to conduct ethnographic research in Cambodia. *Svay* provides a remarkably detailed picture of individual villagers and of Khmer social structure and kinship, agriculture, politics, and religion. The world Ebihara described would soon be shattered by Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge. Fifty percent of the villagers perished in the reign of terror, including those who had been Ebihara's adoptive parents and grandparents during her fieldwork. Never before published as a book, Ebihara's dissertation served as the foundation for much of our subsequent understanding of Cambodian history, society, and politics.

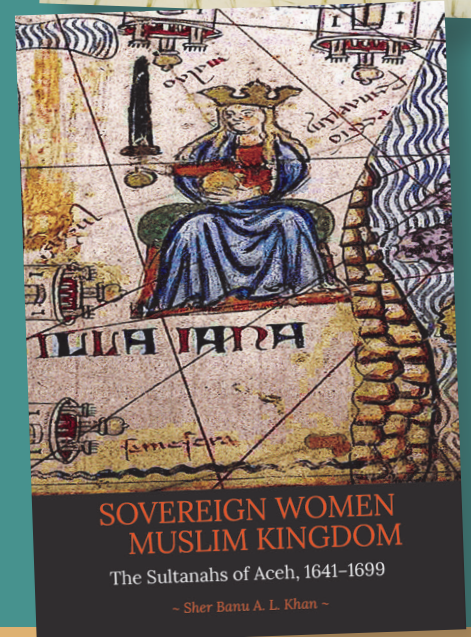
SOVEREIGN WOMEN IN A MUSLIM KINGDOM

The Sultanahs of Aceh, 1641–1699

SHER BANU A. L. KHAN

\$23.95 paper

In *Sovereign Women in a Muslim Kingdom*, Sher Banu A. L. Khan provides a fresh perspective on the women who ruled in Aceh for half the seventeenth century. Khan draws new evidence about the lives and reigns of the sultanahs from contemporary indigenous texts and the archives of the Dutch East India Company. The long reign of the sultanahs of Aceh is striking in a society where women rulers are usually seen as unnatural calamities, a violation of nature, or even forbidden in the name of religion. *Sovereign Women in a Muslim Kingdom* calls into question received views on kingship in the Malay world and shows how an indigenous polity responded to European companies in early encounters during Southeast Asia's age of commerce.



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Southeast Asia Program Publications

Kahin Center, 640 Stewart Ave., Ithaca NY 14850

Sarah E. M. Grossman, Managing Editor | sg265@cornell.edu

In the aftermath of an election marred by divisive rhetoric, many teachers are finding that their classrooms have become open forums for children to express opinions, directed toward minority groups, that are offensive, intolerant, and often disturbing. Refugee students have been among the primary targets.



by Leigha Crout,
graduate assistant
for SEAP outreach

SEAP Co-hosts Workshop on Refugees in the Classroom

“Kids are coming into the classroom spouting things that would be considered DASA [Dignity for All Students Act] violations,” one local teacher observes. DASA was signed into law in New York State in 2010 to ensure a safe and supportive environment for elementary and secondary schoolchildren.

This year’s International Studies Summer Institute (ISSI) workshop, “Teaching about Refugees in a Global Context: Historical Lessons and Contemporary Issues,” was designed to help teachers address precisely such issues. ISSI is an annual professional development opportunity that gives New York State K-12 teachers content, tools, and strategies for internationalizing their curriculum. It is co-organized by Cornell University’s Southeast Asia Program and the South Asia Consortium, comprised of the South Asia Program at Cornell and the South Asia Center at Syracuse. Cornell and Syracuse offer stipends to participating teachers who are eligible for continuing education credits through the Tompkins-Seneca-Tioga BOCES.

“The reality is that the 2016 election sanctioned the ability to say things that were previously out of the question—statements that are racist, xenophobic, and egregiously false,” said Professor Jamie Winders, chair of the Department of Geog-

raphy at Syracuse University and a presenter at the workshop. “I’ve had so many teachers calling after the election and asking me, ‘How do I talk about this with my students?’”

Teachers from the 7th to the 27th New York State school districts, including New York City, Utica, Ithaca, Dryden, and Syracuse, participated in the conference, which was supported by the US Department of Education’s National Resource Centers program. Topics included how to integrate refugee children into the classroom, the need to prioritize education in refugee camps and host nations, and the dangerous rhetoric that has begun to surface in classrooms across the United States.

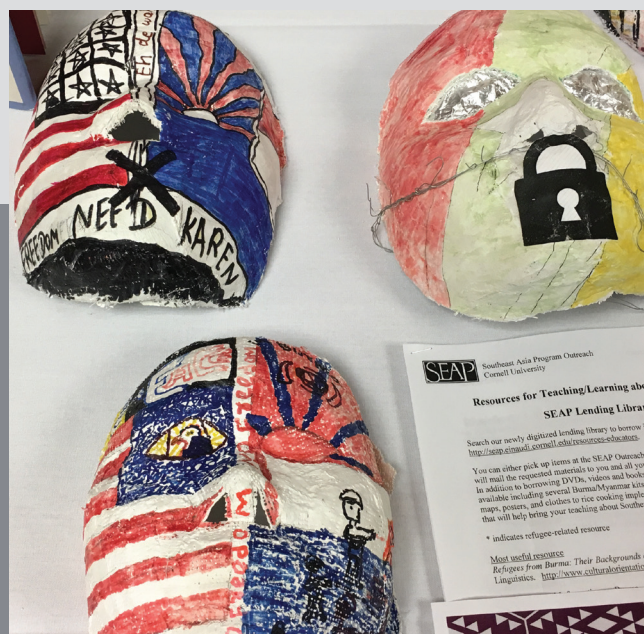
In a presentation titled “Exploring Multicultural and Multilingual Identities through Memoirs, Movies, and Mask Making,” Thamora Fishel, associate director of Cornell’s Southeast Asia Program, and Michelle Kirchgraber-Newton, an English for Speakers of Other Languages teacher at

Right: Masks made by Karen refugee students at Belle Sherman Elementary School in Ithaca, New York.

Page 31 Top: Laos, Hmong people; Refugee Story Quilt, ca. 1989; embroidered cotton and polyester; collection of the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University; gift of Robert L. and Carol Kim Retka.

Page 31 Bottom Left: Gertrude Noden, founder of Words into Deeds, helps teachers develop curriculum.

Page 31 Bottom Right: Thamora Fishel, associate director of SEAP, gives a talk at ISSI on refugees from Burma/Myanmar.





Belle Sherman Elementary School in Ithaca, explained that educating students on the importance of inclusion and diversity may be done through the simple act of sharing. They highlighted the effectiveness of mutual cultural introduction through interactive crafts, media, and open discussions on diversity.

In addition to providing students exposure to different backgrounds, this method also encourages refugee students to be active participants in the classroom, Kirchgraber-Newton says. "For the first time, refugee students feel as if they know more than their peers. This gives these children confidence that is crucial for their development and integration."

Keynote speaker Gertrude Noden, founder of the Ithaca-based educational consultancy Words into Deeds, shared several ways in which teachers can help their students learn empathy, cultural sensitivity, and community activism in a delicate political climate. These include inviting refugee guests into classes to share their experiences, engaging with international human rights documents such as the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and inspiring students to take the initiative in service projects.

At the conclusion of her talk Noden said she was "encouraged that so many dedicated educators were committed to deepening their understanding about current large groups of populations and their willingness to work out ways in which their schools can acknowledge and address the crisis through student action and empowerment."

After discussions of practical methods for promoting unity and understanding among classmates, many participants said their outlook on the upcoming school year had improved.

David George of Dryden Central School District said the summer institute was "a wonderful opportunity for anyone who wants to consider an issue from many angles and perspectives. The current information, diverse views, and interdisciplinary insight shared are invaluable. It is much easier to approach an issue in the classroom after having examined it through cultural, geographical, historical, political, psychological, sociological, and pedagogical lenses."

Jeannette Luther of Spencer-Van Etten Middle School shared that "this year's workshop stimulated our minds on refugees around the globe. I feel so prepared to engage students on discussion concerning refugees. I am also volunteering at a refugee camp in two weeks, and this workshop was a tremendous help!"



SEAP Graduate Student Committee Co-Chairs

The 2017–2018 co-chairs are Mary Kate (MK) Long and Juan Fernandez. They will run the SEAP graduate conference in the spring, social events for the SEAP community, and the weekly Ronald and Janette Gatty Lecture Series, named in honor of SEAP alumni Ronald Gatty and Janette Gatty and their substantial contribution to SEAP programming, especially activities led by graduate students

MARY KATE (MK) LONG is a PhD candidate in the Department of Asian Studies. In her research, MK focuses on relationships between Buddhist nuns and other women and men in and around nunneries in contemporary Myanmar. She also studies Pali literature. In her free time MK enjoys hikes and walks around Ithaca and cooking at home with her family.

JUAN FERNANDEZ is a PhD student in the Department of History, working on colonial-era photography in Maritime Southeast Asia. He is currently working on a project on three-dimensional, stereoscopic photographs of battlefield casualties taken during the American, Dutch, and British colonial wars in the region. Before coming to Cornell, he studied at the University of Chicago. He is looking forward to organizing the Gatty Lectures and the Graduate Student Conference, and is excited to be co-chair for this year's graduate committee.



ANNOUNCEMENTS: On Campus and Beyond

Welcome James Nagy, SEAP administrative assistant

JAMES NAGY is very pleased to be part of the SEAP community. Before starting as the new SEAP administrative assistant this past July, he worked for financial companies such as Tompkins Trust in Ithaca and Avant in Chicago. James graduated with a Master of Arts in theology in 2015 from Fuller Theological Seminary after having studied French and religious history at the University of California-Berkeley. He enjoyed working at his graduate school's library and as a substitute teacher in Los Angeles, where he grew up. James is looking forward to working at Cornell and hopes to continue to foster an atmosphere of direct and open dialogue at SEAP.



SEAP Undergraduate Student Wins First Prize at the Second West-East Debate in Bahasa Indonesia

SEAP undergraduate student, **JAMES LOWELL JACKSON**, class of 2017 international and labor relations, won first prize for the advanced Indonesian category at the second West-East Debate in Bahasa Indonesia (WEDBI II), held last April at the Indonesian Embassy in Washington, DC. This event was a collaboration between Kedutaan Besar Republik Indonesia Kuala Lumpur; Washington, DC; and the Consortium for the Teaching of Indonesian. WEDBI II picks up the baton passed from the first debate in October 2016. The event constitutes a forum for junior and senior Indonesianists from universities across the United States to express their opinions in formal Indonesian. The event celebrates Bahasa Indonesia as the unifying language of the Indonesian nation living in the world's largest archipelago of over 17,000 islands. It also channels academic critiques toward the efforts of the country's current Working Cabinet in maritime development throughout the archipelago.



James graduated from Cornell in 2017 with a bachelor of science degree in industrial and labor relations. He began studying Bahasa Indonesia with Senior Lecturer Jolanda Pandin during his sophomore year. He continued his language training with intensive study during the summer of 2015 through a Critical Language Scholarship and attended the Consortium for the Teaching of Indonesian program during the summer of 2016. Through his studies he has developed an interest in Indonesian literature, specifically the works of Pramoedya Ananta Toer and Eka Kurniawan.

Kahin Center Update

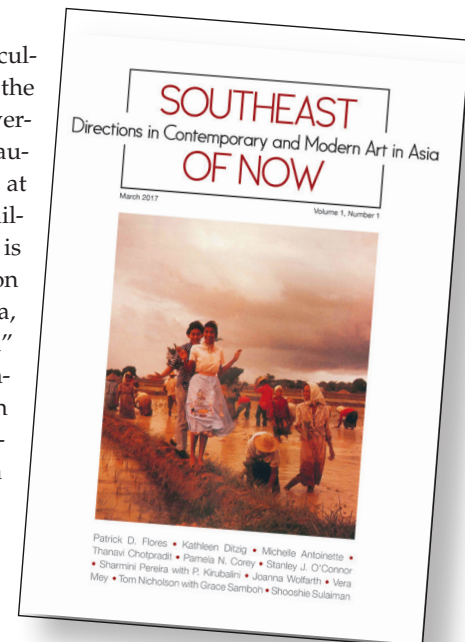
MATTHEW REEDER has graciously accepted the position as the 2017–2018 Kahin Center building manager. Please direct questions and requests to him at kahinbuildingmnger@einaudi.cornell.edu.

Matthew Reeder is a PhD candidate in the Department of History, where he is completing a dissertation on conceptions of ethnicity and kingship in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Siam, Chiang Mai, and Cambodia. He received a master's degree in Southeast Asian studies from the University of Hawai'i and has lived, worked, and conducted research in Thailand, Burma, Laos, and Cambodia.



New Journal, Southeast of Now: Directions in Contemporary and Modern Art in Asia

All those interested in contemporary art and culture in Southeast Asia should be aware of the new journal published by the National University of Singapore: *Southeast of Now*. The inaugural issue is available online free of charge at southeastofnow.com (a print copy is also available in the Cornell Library). The editors' aim is to provide a forum for the rigorous discussion of the histories of the arts in Southeast Asia, encompassing both what we call "modern" and "contemporary." The inaugural issue contains four articles; an extended interview with SEAP's Stanley J. O'Connor, professor emeritus of art history and Asian studies; and a selection of unpublished archival materials.



UPCOMING EVENTS...

NOVEMBER 3–4, 2017

HAUNTED: Temporalities of History and (Moving) Image in 'Asia'

The inaugural 4Asia conference in fall 2017 takes the notion of haunting as its theme. Across historical events, current practices, and diverse media, haunting emerges as a primary and prescient trope of thinking about agency and epistemology in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia. Scholars from the disciplines of history, cinema and media studies, art history, and cultural studies will explore haunting as metaphor, method, and heuristic for conceptualizing cultural, political, and historical transformation across Asia. The inaugural keynote speaker will be the distinguished scholar Tani E. Barlow, T.T. and W.F. Chao Professor of History at Rice University. The conference will take place from November 3–4, 2017 at the A.D. White House.

DECEMBER 5, 2017 8 PM

Cornell Gamelan Ensemble Fall Concert

directed by Christopher J. Miller, senior lecturer, department of music
Neylan Rehearsal Hall, B20
Lincoln Hall.

FOR THE FULL LISTING of the Fall 2017 weekly Gatty lectures, visit: <https://seap.einaudi.cornell.edu/>.

NEW Faculty Associate in Research



DUNCAN MCCARGO

Visiting Professor of Political Science, Columbia University
Professor of Political Science, University of Leeds

Although he is best known for his agenda-setting contributions to current debates on the politics of Thailand, Duncan McCargo's work is centrally concerned with the nature of power. How do entrenched elites seek to retain power in the face of challenges from new political forces? How do challengers to state power try to undermine the legitimacy of existing regimes? These interests have led him to study questions relating to the elections, protest rallies, uses of media, subnational conflicts, and the politics of justice, among other issues.

Professor McCargo has spent several years in Thailand, has lived in Singapore, taught in Cambodia and Japan, and published on Indonesia and Vietnam. *Time* magazine wrote of his work, "No armchairs for this author . . . McCargo is the real McCoy." *Foreign Affairs* cited his 2005 *Pacific Review* article, "Network Monarchy and Legitimacy Crises in Thailand," as a must-read primer on the country's politics.

McCargo's ninth book *Tearing Apart the Land: Islam and Legitimacy in Southern Thailand* (Cornell University Press, 2008) won the Asia Society's inaugural Bernard Schwartz Book Prize for 2009. He held a Leverhulme Trust Major Research Fellowship to work on politics and justice in Thailand (2011–14). He appears regularly on BBC radio and television and has written for *Daily Telegraph*, *Financial Times*, *Guardian*, *New York Times*, and *Time* magazine.

Professor McCargo teaches every spring semester in the Department of Political Science at Columbia University, where he is also affiliated with the Weatherhead East Asian Institute. During 2015–16, he was a resident visitor in the School of Social Science at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton. He is the elected president (2013–17) of the European Association for Southeast Asian Studies, the world's largest organization for the academic study of the region. McCargo is a cofounder of the New York Southeast Asia Network (www.nysean.org), a nonprofit initiative based at Weatherhead and funded by the Luce Foundation.

BOOKS BY DUNCAN MCCARGO

Contemporary Japan, Third Edition (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

Mapping National Anxieties: Thailand's Southern Conflict (NIAS Press, 2012).

Tearing Apart the Land: Islam and Legitimacy in Southern Thailand (Cornell University Press, 2008).

Rethinking Thailand's Southern Violence (NUS Press, 2007).

The Thaksinization of Thailand (NIAS Press, 2005).

Rethinking Vietnam (Routledge, 2004).

Media and Politics in Pacific Asia (Routledge, 2003).

Reforming Thai Politics (NIAS Press, 2002).

Politics and the Press in Thailand: Media Machinations (Routledge, 2000).

Chamlong Srimuang and the New Thai Politics (Hurst, 1997).

Two SEAP Faculty Received 2017 Internationalizing the Cornell Curriculum Grants

The aim of the Internationalizing the Cornell Curriculum (ICC) grants is to support the development of rigorous, innovative approaches in teaching, learning, and research that strengthen the integration of international content and cross-cultural competence within the curriculum to benefit undergraduate students.

SAROSH KURUVILLA, Andrew J. Nathanson Family professor of industrial and labor relations Restructuring the ILR Global Scholars Program

The goal of this project is to evaluate and restructure the Global Scholars Program at the Cornell School of Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR). Restructuring the program will involve creating a new capstone course for participants and expanding the program's reach. The Global Scholar designation, which appears on the student's transcript, is currently awarded to students who complete a series of international requirements. These include a significant study or engagement period abroad, demonstration of mastery of a second or third language, completion of a specified number of courses with global or regional content, and submission of a written, reflective paper in consultation with a faculty advisor. When the program was introduced five years ago, ILR limited entry through a stringent GPA requirement. The school now seeks to relax the GPA requirement to allow more students to participate. Expansion of the program will significantly increase our international faculty's advising load at a time when anecdotal evidence suggests that the faculty-advised reflective paper is not meeting the purpose for which it was designed. Therefore, we plan to replace this component of the program through the introduction of a more rigorous capstone course that will encourage reflection on and learning from students' international experiences. We will hire a postdoctoral scholar in comparative industrial relations, who will work with faculty in the Department of International and Comparative Labor to conduct an evaluation of the program and design the new capstone course.



ABBY COHN, professor of linguistics, SEAP director Linguistics for the Global Citizen: Foundations and Tools

The goal of this project is to develop the use of linguistic concepts and tools to enhance successful language learning, study abroad, and engaged learning as part of the international experience available to Cornell students. The two key components of the proposal include developing a new 1000-level course in linguistics, tentatively titled Insights into Language and Culture: Tools for the Global Learner, and developing a miniworkshop on linguistic tools for study abroad as a breakout session for the Cornell Abroad Predeparture Orientation program. Both of these activities will be developed in collaboration with Cornell Abroad and the Cornell Language Resource Center. Linguistic analysis and the sociolinguistic and cross-cultural perspectives fundamental to the study of linguistics offer a useful toolbox to strengthen language learning and increased linguistic and cultural awareness gained through study abroad. Both components of the proposal teach these tools to interested students. The proposed course and miniworkshop fit naturally in the ICC focus on "Global at Home," providing support for and synergy with language learning on campus and preparation for and integration of study abroad experiences. These activities support the contributions that linguistics can make in the increased focus on internationalization of the curriculum and further strengthen collaborations between academic units, the Language Resource Center, and Cornell Abroad. The proposed course meets the design objectives of developing a new, internationally oriented course, with a primary focus on strengthening language competence and developing cross-cultural competence. Both the course and miniworkshop will develop innovative pedagogical approaches integrating a cross-cultural and international perspective drawing on students' own experiences.





Jenny Goldstein,
assistant professor
of sociology

NEW FACULTY

Interviewed and edited by Deborah Membreno, master's student, international development, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, 2017

DEBORAH MEMBRENO: What does your current research focus on?

Jenny Goldstein: I am currently working on a number of projects, including continuing the work I began during my time at UCLA as a PhD student in geography. I'm trained as a political ecologist, so my approach to research is showing how political economic institutions, power relations between individual actors, and environmental change interact, primarily in the rural tropics. I do qualitative research, including in-depth interviews with people and some participant observation when I am doing fieldwork. I am working on an ongoing project on the politics shaping Indonesia's peatland degradation and attempts at restoring these degraded areas. This involves actors such as smallholder farmers, loggers, and village heads in my fieldsite in Central Kalimantan province in Borneo, as well as consultants, scientists, and government officials in Jakarta. During my time as an Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future postdoc at Cornell, I also started a new project that asks how publicly available or easily accessible satellite data and imagery is impacting conservation and land investment practices in Southeast Asia. As the quantity and quality of this type of data has increased tremendously over the past few years and has become available to nonexperts, it raises a lot of questions about what this data is doing out in the world, who is using it, and for what purpose. My intention is to be able to explore this issue through a series of smaller case studies in Indonesia and Myanmar. Through this research I'm also hoping to build up the connections between critical development studies and sci-

ence and technologies studies—two disciplines that have typically taken very different approaches to understanding the world.

DM: What sparked an interest in working in Southeast Asia?

JG: I first became interested in Asia during my undergraduate career, when I did a minor in Japanese culture and participated in a Buddhist studies study abroad program in Japan. For my MA in geography at UCLA, I spent a summer in Rwanda doing ethnographic research on coffee commodity chains. While I liked doing fieldwork in agricultural areas in the tropics, I wasn't sure that I wanted to commit to going back to East Africa for many years to come. My heart was really in Asia, though I had never thought about Southeast Asia much before that. Several coffee buyers in Rwanda told me about their work in Sumatra and Sulawesi [in Indonesia], which sparked my interest. After some preliminary research I realized there were enough complex political-environmental issues in Indonesia to keep me occupied in the long term, even if my initial interest in coffee petered out, which it did. UCLA, like Cornell, has an excellent Indonesian language program and financial support for graduate students who work in Indonesia. In that way, the decision to work in Southeast Asia was pragmatic. So, the pieces sort of fell into place as I started my PhD and was taking beginning Indonesian language. I went to Java and Sulawesi the following summer, in 2010, for language training and to scout out potential research topics. I've been back almost every year since.

DM: What is the most interesting project you have worked on?

JG: I'm fortunate in that I have always designed my own research projects, so they are all interesting to me! I think the ongoing research I'm doing in Kalimantan [Indonesian Borneo] on land-based fires and transboundary haze has been the most empirically interesting, because the issue affects millions of people, has complicated causes on the ground, and is also tied to global climate change politics and finance. When these fires are very severe, as they were in 2015, they release enough carbon dioxide to make Indonesia the world's third-largest carbon emitter [after the US and China], though without the fires they are ranked only 25th or something. This has implications for Indonesia's broader economic development strategies and its involvement with global climate politics, such as through the UN Paris Agreement, which mandates carbon emissions reductions for all signatories. And, of course, the smoke from the fires is so noxious it will cause early mortality for an estimated 100,000 people in the region. So it's a very large and multifaceted problem to work on, if also a depressing one. Beyond that, I have had a lot of fun exploring Kalimantan's peat swamps in a tiny boat for my fieldwork.

DM: What do you feel is important about your research?

JG: In a way, the importance of the research I've been doing on the impacts of these massive fires on an entire region's health and economy, as well as their contribution to global carbon emissions, sort of speaks for itself. But it's harder to figure out how my approach to uncovering the deeper roots

“The smoke from the fires is so noxious it will cause early mortality for an estimated 100,000 people in the region. So it’s a very large and multifaceted problem to work on.”

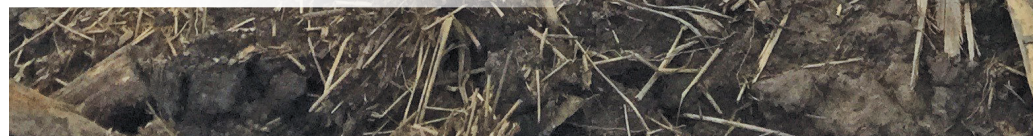
of the problem, and to showing that its causes and solutions are not as straightforward as many people think, actually makes a difference in the world. It can be heartbreaking to hear when people I know personally are suffering from the effects of the smoke and realize that there’s not much that I, or my research, can do about it in the short term.

DM: How have you worked with SEAP or utilized its resources during your time at Cornell?

JG: I was part of SEAP’s Gatty Lecture Series in 2016, giving a talk titled “Arson on Our Own Land: The Politics of Tracking Fire in Indonesia.” SEAP funded a short trip to Myanmar that I took last summer to explore research possibilities there. I’m grateful for that financial support, which may be relatively small in the long term but goes a very long way in kickstarting a new project. That kind of initial trip, of up to two weeks or so, where you don’t know many people or even what you’re looking for might not yield a lot of research in and of itself. But it allowed me to see what kind of research is feasible and relevant there and to start building a network of contacts that I tapped into when I returned to Yangon this January. I find Myanmar to be a fascinating and beautiful place, with very kind, respectful people, and at an important point in their transition to a democratic government. I’m looking forward to returning once a year or so to build up my research there over time. Aside from that, it’s been wonderful to get to know my SEAP colleagues. It’s a very welcoming community on campus and feels very much like a home away from my home department.

DM: Advice for students who are interested in studying Southeast Asia?

JG: Graduate students at Cornell are very savvy, and many already have a good idea of where and what they want to study when they arrive on campus. But even if they have never been to Southeast Asia when they start grad school, I would say don’t be intimidated, and it’s not too late. I didn’t go to Indonesia until the first year of my PhD program. Get involved with SEAP and the language courses as soon as possible, and it’s possible to end up with a research career in Southeast Asia. I would also encourage them to take at least two years of a Southeast Asian language if they are pursuing a PhD, though most in the social sciences and humanities do that already, I think. I’d like to see more graduate students in the natural sciences, like ecology, take a year of a Southeast Asian language. Many of them do extensive fieldwork there in rural or forested areas and need to communicate with local assistants. Learning a bit of the language and culture can make the fieldwork easier and help them formulate a long-term expertise in the region. For undergrads interested in Southeast Asia, or in the “developing” world in general, I’d recommend spending a summer doing an internship there, working for a local organization or teaching English. Getting some time to live on your own, outside of a structured program, in a Southeast Asian city or village can be a challenging but life-affirming experience and expose undergrads or recent grads to new career directions.



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Leang Seckon
Cambodian, born ca. 1970
The Buried Jewelry, 2016
Collage
50 x 63.5 cm
Acquired through the
George and Mary Rockwell Fund

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